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... p. 12

**Christian-Muslim standoff
in Nigeria ... pp. 17, 18**



56th year of publication

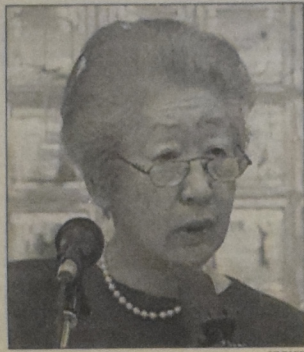
UN refugee agency celebrates 50 years of difficult work

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — What started as a temporary agency to help settle refugees from the Second World War is now celebrating its 50th year of often difficult, challenging work. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) started with a three-year mandate to settle one million displaced Europeans, but now faces the challenge of how to help out 22 million refugees worldwide.

UNHCR has twice won the Nobel Peace Prize. It works in about 120 countries and has a staff of 5,000. It has a mandate to help and protect refugees and people displaced within their own countries as well as impoverished communities which host large refugee populations.

One major challenge the



Outgoing UNHCR High Commissioner Sadako Ogata.

agency faces is how to finance its \$953 million (U.S.) budget for this year. Only two per cent of its budget comes from the UN. The rest has traditionally come from dona-

tions from 14 major industrialized nations, especially the U.S. In a funding appeal issued in Geneva in 1991, UNHCR High Commissioner Sadako Ogata warned that her agency couldn't make further cuts in its budget without jeopardizing the essence of its work.

At the end of December, Ogata left UNHCR after 10 years as High Commissioner, and has been replaced by former Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers. In a farewell speech, Ogata reflected on her years in office and on the challenges the agency faces.

'Hit the ground running'

Mrs. Ogata, a former academic who took over in 1991, described how she had to 'hit the ground running' on her arrival at UNHCR. "I had to think very quickly — and two main conclusions permeated

my vision of the office in the years to come. The first was that UNHCR would end if it remained a slow, static, conservative organization; if UNHCR was to stay relevant — and when I say relevant, I mean to refugees — then it had to be quick, smart, effective, and adaptable to a fast-changing environment.

"The second conclusion was that just to speak from the 'high moral ground' on which ... the High Commissioner stood, was not enough. Telling states to protect refugees was fine — but we had to help them do it, and actively search for solutions while staying as much as possible close to the refugees themselves, so that our arguments would be credible."

Looking at the future, Mrs. Ogata said crucial priorities for UNHCR include:

- Refining UNHCR's ability to prepare for, and respond to emergencies;
- Clarifying the relationship between refugees and migration in an era of globalization that has changed the way people move across borders in search of safety, or jobs, or both;
- Closing the so-called 'gap' between emergency assistance and longer-term development.

Four UN staff killed

Ogata remembered UNHCR staff who died in the line of duty, including four murdered in less than two weeks last September in West Timor and Guinea. "Sometimes in the past ten years the burden of suffering and death that our work entails has been difficult to carry — for all of us," she told

See POSSIBLE page 2...

Catholic institutions seek to prevent experiments with human embryos

Harry der Nederlanden

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — The Roman Catholic Church has put its money where its mouth is. It is establishing a placenta and umbilical cord bank at the hospital connected with the Catholic University of Rome. The placenta and umbilical cord are an alternate source of human stem cells, which are also derived from human embryos.

Growing replacement organs

Stem cells have been discovered to be extremely plastic, that is, they are not yet specialized and can be made to develop into muscle, nerve, heart or blood cells. Scientists see in them the possibility of growing replacement organs for transplants. They may also serve to combat certain degenerative diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's or to treat diabetes, MS, burns and spinal cord injuries. It is, therefore, no wonder that researchers are eager for sources of stem cells for experimentation. The



LENNART NILSSON, LIFE MAGAZINE

A human embryo six-and-a-half weeks old.

primary source, however, has been human embryos. Until recently, experimentation with human embryos has been severely restricted by law.

Last year, however, the British parliament passed a bill that allows scientists to harvest embryos up to two weeks old as a source of stem cells and also to clone embryos in

the lab for the same purpose. Cloned embryos would provide a perfect match for a patient since they would be derived from the same genetic material.

U.S. President Bill Clinton also approved guidelines drawn up by the National Institute of Health which allow scientists access to public funds for stem cell research with embryos. The guidelines stipulate that only unwanted frozen embryos left over at fertility clinics may be used and that no payment be involved so that there's no incentive to create new embryos for sale.

'Nothing short of cannibalism'

Both governments were strongly criticized by pro-life groups, which consider any human embryo, frozen or not, to be human life. A German politician called the British approach "nothing short of cannibalism." And Germany's Science Minister, Edelgard Bulmahn described it as

a transgression of ethical and moral boundaries. Many religious leaders spoke of being on the slippery slope toward cloning human beings.

A 'criminal act'

The Pontifical Academy for Life, created by John Paul II, called such research unacceptable because it does not treat the embryo as a human being. Bishop Elio Sgreccia, vice-president of the Academy, said that to use the tissue of an embryo is tantamount to killing a person. It is a "criminal act" catastrophic for the future of humanity, he argued, because it propagates the idea that an embryo is not a human being. This makes it not just a crime against life, he charged, but also a crime against truth.

Ben Mitchell, a Southern Baptist ethicist and professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, questioned whether the U.S. Guidelines would be able to maintain what he

See CATHOLIC page 3...

News

Refugee agencies reflect on work of UNHCR

Alan Doerksen

TORONTO — With the rapidly changing world of refugees and the problems they face, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) needs changes to make it more relevant, according to Canadian refugee agencies.

"If you're looking at international organizations, it's one of the most effective," says Tom Clark, describing UNHCR. Clark is co-ordinator of the Inter-Church Committee for Refugees (ICCR), a coalition of 10 Canadian church bodies including Christian Reformed, Presbyterian, Anglican, Baptist and Catholic. He appreciates that UNHCR has "a real presence of international people" on its staff.

Structural problems

But Clark asserts that UNHCR has structural problems. One is its "three-year renewable mandate, which is ludicrous." Although started as a temporary agency, UNHCR has been functioning for 50 years. Funding is another problem. "The funding is always in question," says Clark. "It's run on special appeals."

One major concern ICCR has is "we've felt the Convention on Refugees needs to be updated. It covers a minimum of refugees. We've said it needs a protocol that updates it," suggests Clark. The original Convention, which defines what refugees are and how governments should treat them, dates back to 1951. Last September ICCR wrote to UNHCR, suggest-

ing that the Convention should:

- give protection to mass exoduses of civilians fleeing conflicts;

- provide for some forms of diplomatic asylum for persons trapped in home countries who would otherwise be refugees.

Clark notes that the UNHCR has already "talked about provisions for massive exoduses of persons. That was tried out during the Bosnia conflict and Kosovo."

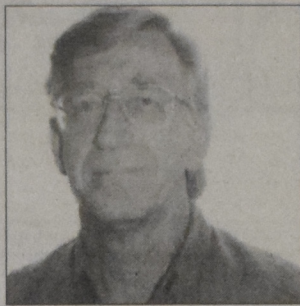
But in Rwanda several years ago, thousands of people fled and many died in genocidal attacks. "The UN should have gone in and stopped [the conflict] at the beginning," Clark asserts.

Looking at causes of today's massive refugee problem, Clark says, "some are development-related, some are human rights-related." For instance, some people are displaced as a result of development work such as building a dam.

Globalization is also a cause of refugees "in the cyclical sense: economic deprivation leading to unrest, to conflict," explains Clark.

Since the 1990s, "it became increasingly hard for refugees to cross borders," observes Clark. As a result, many of these refugees live in camps in their own countries, and are called "internally-displaced people" by the UN.

The recently-retired High Commissioner of UNHCR, Sadako Ogata, says Clark, "succeeded in building the significance and work of the organization, but the protec-



LIGHTHOUSE

Ben Vanderlugt, executive director of the Lighthouse.

tion of the human rights side of the work has been put into second place."

Canada "certainly appears to be among the better governments," in dealing with refugees, says Clark, but he believes Canada should accept more refugees. "Our position is that those who have been given much should try to give more."

Clark is concerned that the government is too quick to react to public intolerance of refugees. In a recent letter to the *Ottawa Citizen*, he wrote, "From the first boats off Nova Scotia in the late 1980s to the 1999 boat arrivals off Vancouver, successive governments have used periodic outbursts of public hostility to justify changes to the Immigration Act.... Naturally, Canadians become angry when told there is abuse of refugee procedures. But they should be equally incensed when our refugee system puts innocent people at risk."

Ben Vanderlugt, executive director of Lighthouse (a Christian Reformed outreach to refugees, based in Toronto), would like to see greater public awareness of real refugees, rather than illegal ones who come to Canada by "artificial means." Samia Saad, refugee coordinator for the Lighthouse, adds, "For those few refugees who commit crime, there's really bad press.... Canadians are very influenced by the media."

Much red tape

Saad gives a mixed review of the UNHCR. She thinks the it is good in finding information and in screening refugees, but "sometimes it's not too fast, and there's a lot of red tape."

Vanderlugt agrees: "When a piece of paper sits on a desk for a week or two, it's very frustrating." In some countries, moreover, the UN is not very influential, and they do not allow the UN to screen refugees.

Saad points out that it's not all the UN's fault: "the Canadian processing time is one of the worst in the world. Other countries are a lot faster than Canada. That's one problem we're dealing with: how to make it faster."

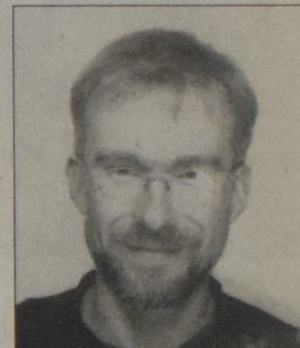
Increasing globalization will worsen the refugee situation, she predicts, because economics are often at the core of conflicts. "I think the UNHCR can be a tool for bringing a solution" to refugee problems, she suggests. "The UN has the potential to do a lot of prevention work."

One other problem is that countries, such as Egypt, which have signed the UN's Convention on Refugees have themselves been producing refugees, Saad contends. "Sometimes, I think the UN isn't firm enough" with those countries.

Canada should accept more refugees than it has been doing, asserts Saad. In recent years, "the numbers have diminished," she says. "Churches only bring in 2,000 refugees a year." Helping churches to sponsor refugees is a key part of The Lighthouse's work.

Peace education

The work of UNHCR has become "increasingly complex and difficult" since its beginnings 50 years ago, says Tim Wichert, Refugee Co-ordinator for Mennonite Central Committee Canada (MCC). "I personally believe they're helping and protecting more refugees than 10 years ago." Of Ogata's work, he says, "I personally would commend her for the job she's done."



COURTESY TIM WICHERT

Tim Wichert, Refugee Co-ordinator for MCC Canada.

But Wichert observes, "UNHCR is only as good as the governments that support it" — financially and politically. "We think the [Canadian] government should be providing more funds to UNHCR."

When stationed in Geneva, Switzerland, Wichert worked closely with UNHCR. Now based in St. Catharines, Ont., he has been in touch with UNHCR on issues such as immigration policy and MCC's work resettling refugees in Canada.

"One thing we've pushed is peace education," says Wichert. "We've encouraged UNHCR to try to encourage and be supportive of education" in refugee camps, including "a component of peace education or conflict resolution."

War is one main cause of refugees, asserts Wichert. Other root causes are: "human rights abuses, lack of respect for other ethnic, religious groups."

Because it works on the refugees frontlines, UNHCR tends to get criticized, says Wichert. Looking at the agency's lack of intervention in Rwanda five years ago, Wichert says, "now we can look back and say, 'There should have been more political will to do something.'"

Wichert believes UNHCR should get more involved in political discussions aimed at resolving conflicts. The agency should also give more help to people displaced within their home countries.

MCC, too, would like Canada to accept more refugees. About 20,000 refugee claimants a year come to Canada's borders, and about 10,000 are accepted each year. "Our numbers could easily be up," says Wichert. "We have a human and moral obligation to make sure we have a significant number of our immigrants be refugees."

Possible flashpoints worry UNHCR head

... continued from page 1

agency staff. "Nothing can compensate the loss of our friends, and of many refugees who have perished in spite of our efforts. But — please — be proud of the courage of so many colleagues trying to help millions of people worldwide; and rejoice in the knowledge that you have — indeed — saved thousands of lives. This is an extraordinary achievement.... I believe that what has kept me going is our collective effort to turn the terror and pain that I saw in too many eyes into the relief of safety, and into the exhilarating joy of returning home. It has been a worthwhile effort."

Very worried about West Africa

"If I look at the world, I see the future as rather unsettled — at least for a while.... There will be more emergencies involving refugees

and internally displaced people. I am very worried about West Africa — Guinea in particular. The situation in Central Africa, especially in Congo, is far from a solution. And there are other flashpoints — Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Central Asia, Colombia. Even previously stable regions like East Asia show signs of fragility.... We should not forget the immense destabilizing potential of one refugee crisis that we don't deal with directly — the Palestinians in the Middle East.

"The risk of emergencies is further complicated by the fact that in many situations, people on the move are targets, hostages and fighters at the same time — like in West Timor and Guinea. All this is very dangerous. The lessons of the Rwandan exodus in the former Zaire do not seem to have been learned."

At a news conference in Geneva, Ogata admitted,

"UNHCR's 50th anniversary is, in itself, no cause for celebration. In fact, our longevity is a reflection of the international community's failure to prevent prejudice, persecution, poverty and other causes of conflict and displacement.

"So we are marking this anniversary year by highlighting the courage and contributions of millions of refugees around the world. Refugees come from every walk of life.... They deserve our respect for overcoming all odds to survive and begin their lives anew."

To mark its 50 years of work, UNHCR supporters worldwide are holding a series of events over the next six months focused on promoting respect for refugees. The events will culminate in a sound and light show at the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor on June 20 — designated by the U.N. General Assembly as the first World Refugee Day.

News/Politics

Catholic university plans to store placentas, umbilical cords

... continued from page 1

calls "the firewall between the act of destroying the embryo and the use of stem cells in research." He maintained the position held by almost all prolife groups: "Human embryos, even at the earliest stages, are fully human. They would develop into fully formed infants if nurtured for nine months."

Defenders of the practice, of course, point out that the frozen embryos stored at fertility clinics would eventually be destroyed anyway. To be consistent, the prolife movement would have to

condemn the practice of fertility clinics as well, which the Catholic Church does.

Bone cells instead of embryos

The American Life League insisted that the use of embryos is unnecessary because ways have recently been discovered to conduct the same experiments using adult bone cells.

Umbilical cords and placentas are proven sources of the same stem cells, so by creating the bank the Catholic Church hopes to make the use of embryos unnecessary.

The Catholic University hopes other hospitals will follow suit so that a large network will soon be set up. The material will be collected after childbirth and frozen and stored for future use. The placenta and umbilical cord used to be discarded. Individuals will also be able to store their children's material for later use, in case someone in the family developed a disease in later life that responds to such therapy.

It has also been pointed out that much of the furor about the use of stem cells is still itself very much in the embryonic stage. Most treat-

ments have yet to be developed.

Critics point out that there is a fine line between the search for cures to debilitating diseases and the quest for immortality. There is big money to be made in extending life expectancy, and stem cell research does raise hopes of combatting certain aspects of the

ageing process. Such benefits would, of course, be available only to the rich. As biotechnology and medical research advances under the prospect of making big profits for drug companies, moral and political questions have become more urgent and limits are difficult to maintain.

A correction and apology

An error which Mr. Hofman asked us to correct before publication in his last article somehow slipped by us anyway. The article stated that the DeVos foundation provided 60,000 scholarships annually to needy students. This is actually the number of applications the foundation received. The DeVos foundation awarded 4,000 scholarships of \$1,000.00 or more. Sorry Ty. We try and try, but — deep sigh — some do get by.

Don't trade in your glasses yet: the pictures were blurry

We're embarrassed by the blurry pictures that appeared in the last issue (and in some copies of

previous issues as well). Our printer has promised to do better in the future. Although we spotted the problem, there were so many that we could not winnow the wheat from the chaff, so quite a few of you got chaff. We add our apologies to those from our printer (below). **Harry der Nederlanden**

During the printing of the January 8, 2001 issue of the Christian Courier, several hundred 'start-up' copies were accidentally included in the distribution. Our apologies to *Christian Courier* and to any readers who received them for any inconvenience this may have caused. **Oxford Web Printing**

Canada becoming semi-democracy



Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

Last month Mexico inaugurated its new president, Vicente Fox Quesada, who stunned the world at last June's election when he overturned the 71-year hold of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) on the presidency. Mexico had never been a vibrant democracy, and the long oligarchical rule of a single party had led to decades of corruption in government circles, exacerbating the country's chronic poverty. Whether Fox and his National Action Party (PAN) will succeed in solving Mexico's huge social and economic problems remains to be seen. But the increasing competitiveness of elections is a positive sign.

Liberal monopoly not endangered

Contrast this to Canada, which seems to be evolving from a thriving two-party-plus democracy into a Mexican-style one-party semi-democracy led by an entrenched political oligarchy in Ottawa. Our current single-member-plurality electoral system ensures that the opposition of nearly 60 per cent of Canadians will not seriously endanger the monopoly on political power of the Liberal Party under its current leader. Moreover, despite the Prime Minister's constitutional position as merely first among equals, as opposed to chief executive officer in the American presidential sense, he can still get his way even over the opposition of fellow cabinet ministers, much less the lowly back-benchers in his parliamentary caucus.

Our current system allows him to time an election to his own liking, effectively breaking out of the starting gate before his principal opposition has had the opportunity to get on its feet. He can go to the people more than a year and a half before the expiry of his constitutional mandate for no compelling reason other than his own fear of bad economic news in 2001, of a loss of personal popularity due to his own diminishing leadership capabilities, and of a strengthened Canadian Alliance Party. By (apparently) persuading a committee's Liberal members to "lose their way" to hear the Auditor General present an unflattering report just before an election call, he can effectively prevent a quorum and the reading of the report.

According to Lord Acton's most quoted dictum, power corrupts and absolute power

corrupts absolutely. Of course, Acton's opinion notwithstanding, there is nothing intrinsically corrupting about power, which remains the good creation of God. Nevertheless, if especially political power is insufficiently circumscribed by constitutional and legal limits, then its holders — who are, after all, fallible, sinful human beings — will tend to abuse it for their own purposes. An entrenched political party with little hope of being overturned will inevitably become complacent and perhaps even a bit arrogant in its dealing with citizens.

What is the answer? As I wrote in this space last autumn, we ought to have fixed but flexible election dates along German lines. This would take the timing of elections out of the prime minister's hands. Other reforms should be considered as well.

Parliament should vote on judges

First, the considerable powers of appointment possessed by the prime minister should be shared with other institutional actors, such as Parliament. Given the increasing powers of the Supreme Court since 1982, appointment of court justices ought to be subject to some form of parliamentary scrutiny, perhaps including committee hearings and a subsequent free vote in the House of Commons.

Second, some element of proportional representation ought to be incorporated into our current electoral system, thereby making it impossible for a single political party to keep a stranglehold on power over the repeated objections of most Canadians.

Third and finally, the parties need to reform themselves, giving backbenchers a voice, making cabinet a more collegial body, and loosening party discipline at least with respect to nonfinancial legislation. In this way we might emulate Mexico's example and return to a more genuinely competitive democracy.



David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, and hopes that the new millennium will bring needed political reform to this country.

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Editorial

Let's fight, but let's make it a good fight

Harry der Nederlanden

One of the surest ways for us to get letters to the editor is for one of our writers to make a critical comment about some prominent Christian leader or movement. Tim Antonides' snarky comments about the glitziness of Schuller's *Hour of Power*, for example, drew more letters than we could print. In our churches, too, criticism, especially criticism that invokes Reformed theology, often gets the cold shoulder. "Let's not get into theology," we say when someone raises principial objections to some new proposal or project. Theological discussions are seen as divisive or, at best, a diversion from the real business of the Christian life.

Nay-sayers and nitpickers

It is true that criticism and defending differences of doctrine can be done not just obnoxiously but even destructively. We are wary and weary of a partisan Christianity that sets itself up as the righteous judge and which is so sure of the rightness of its cause that it is willing to tear churches apart. The numerous divisions in the church, especially among those claiming the name Reformed, are an embarrassment to us — and rightly so. Most of us would like to put such schisms and nitpicking divisions behind us — and no wonder. Nothing kills enthusiasm and initiative quicker than bumping up against nay-sayers and nitpickers every time you try something new.

Many of us have begun to think of the Reformed

perspective or Reformed doctrine as a system of quality control: it subjects the faith — reduced to beliefs — to measurement by some finely calibrated instrument. Whatever doesn't pass inspection, it seems, gets stamped **Reject**.

If that is what the Reformed perspective has become, it has become the very image of what it first opposed. The Reformers spoke out against a faith that had become little more than an Accuser, burdening people with guilt rather than liberating them.

The Christian faith, we believe, is one that affirms, that frees us from human rules and judgments, that builds a more inclusive community, that fosters a spirit of harmony, compassion, kindness, mutual support — in short, of love, which Paul calls the greatest of God's gifts. It proclaims a God-for-us, and if God is for us, who can be against us?

Sharp and sometimes slashing critique

Yet, the notion that Christianity is purely positive, never negative or critical, is patent nonsense. Luther's 95 Theses and the reams of pamphlets that he wrote later don't pull any punches when it comes to criticizing the teachings and the practices of the church of his day. Not that I want to suggest that we model ourselves after Luther or Calvin (who was much more moderate) in this respect. Yet, without the sharp and sometimes slashing critique of the Reformers, the horrible abuses and distortions of the faith that prevailed at the time would have continued. To liberate their fellows from oppressive misrepresentations of the Gospel so that it would once again be Good News, they had to break chains. In fact, they ended up breaking down a rather wholistic society and culture that had taken centuries to build up and which endured for centuries.

If the example of the Reformation doesn't convince that sometimes the Word of the Lord is a two-edged sword, turn to the Old Testament judges or the prophets. Neither seem to excel in tact. They never read *The Power of Positive Thinking* or *The Be [Happy] Attitudes*. Thank God for those outspoken, hairy contrarians: they fearlessly uttered the Word of the Lord despite the fact that they made people uncomfortable and violated all sorts of social sensibilities. Then take Jesus himself: he was rudely critical of a group of leaders who exemplified the best of the moral majority of his day. The Pharisees were the Stockwell Days and Bushes, the Schullers and Pat Robertsons, the Colsons and Dobsons of that time, for they set the moral tone for the nation — one rooted in Scripture and Tradition. It was not they but Jesus who violated the decorum and cohesion of Jewish society.

I don't mean this as a defense of any and all put-downs. Only to point out that our longing for love harmony and civility can go too far if it represses all signs of disagreement and conflict as unChristian.

I am in the process of arranging a long and loose series of reflections by different writers on the core teachings of the Reformed tradition. As I did some preparation, I became more aware than ever before of the extent to which these teachings are not just positive declarations. All of them are honed on opposition. They are as much *against* something as they are *for* something. They assert a difference — a huge, drastic, earth-shaking difference.

Many contemporary critics have faulted the church for attempting to create a constellation of purely positive doctrines that stand fixed in the heavens far above

all local cultural conflicts. Quite the contrary seems to be the case. One key teaching after another is dressed in the dented armor of some particular conflict. In fact, entire confessional statements emerged from and still echo with contention. Is this nothing more than a sign of our inescapable sinfulness and tribalism?

Conflict on a cosmic scale

Not entirely. Doctrines are a response and witness to the acts of God, and these always thrust us into a conflict. From beginning to end the Bible is a tale of conflict on a cosmic scale. We may not like martial imagery, but the biblical story cannot be told without it. The teachings of the church arise from this story. They are, thus, steeped not just in the conflicts that beset the church when they were formulated but also in the conflict unfolded in Scripture.

Biblical teachings are not facts to be contemplated. They enlist us in the conflict, calling us to distinguish the false from the true and the living from the dead in a theatre of war where none of these appear in a pure form. Where everything is grey, discerning the opposing spirits is no easy task; as soon as we try, we find ourselves oversimplifying and creating caricatures.

We are involved, moreover, not just in a conflict with spirits, movements, trends, ideas, customs and structures that militate against the truth from outside; we are also engaged with the demons that stalk from within — from within our own hearts and from within the very traditions and community we are defending.

Even such basic teachings as that the Lord God is one God or that the Lord is Creator of heaven and earth are stated in opposition. Throughout the Old Testament the God of Israel is depicted as the God who defeats and brings to naught the gods of the nations. To confess that the Lord God is one God is to enter into battle against the gods. The creation account in Genesis, when set side by side with pagan counterparts, appears to be almost a point by point contradiction. Instead of the cosmos and what is in it being a result of the coupling of the gods, they are created by God's speaking. Instead of the heavenly bodies themselves being gods, they are nothing more, or less, than created things. To confess that God is Creator is to fight against all attempts to treat created things as divine.

So to have faith is to enter into a fight against powers and principalities. Postmoderns realize this. They know there is no neutral, detached truth, but a battle among competing truths. Christian faith, however, removes from us the anxiety that comes from having to create and uphold truth by force of our own mind and spirit. Faith means confessing that God alone, because he alone is God and Creator, determines truth. So his Son tells us, "Take a look at the lilies growing in the fields. They don't sow or spin; yet, their beauty outstrips that of Solomon, the philosopher-king."

The cross of Christ radically redefines the terms of conflict. To win, he sacrificed not others but himself. In the light of that sacrifice, we see ourselves engaged not in a battle to destroy the Other, whoever that may be, but to preserve the Other. We seek not the victory of our own group and our own way of life, but of a Way that challenges us as well as "them" to be transformed into his image and likeness.

To do that we need to be able to correct one another, to contend with one another, to teach one another. Conflict, like discipline, is a way of holding on to one another.

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Letters

Public appeal to Premier Harris to launch social-justice revolution

I agree with Premier Harris: (when he told reporters at a year-end news conference) "The crisis that took place in Walkerton was the one that was most tragic and impacted certainly, not just the government, but ... the whole province in a very shocking way."

Another crisis that is "shocking" and "tragic" is the government's hard-hearted refusal to restore the social assistance (which it mercilessly chopped by 22 per cent in 1995) for families to house and feed their children.

Surplus could help poor

The government recently announced a \$1.4 billion surplus. It could be used effectively to help poverty-stricken people. Their daily struggle for survival becomes increasingly desperate, especially now that we experience a cold winter and rising heating and rental costs.

I ask Premier Harris: How can you and your Common Sense revolutionaries live with your conscience when you have just

spent over one billion dollars on income tax rebates (which mostly benefit the wealthy) and continue to discriminate against countless poor people who are left in the cold?

Their human right to a decent life is a right that has long been recognized in Ontario. Poor people are equally entitled, in keeping with our Canadian Charter and with the U.N. Charter and Covenants, to the kind of basic protection that they're now being denied through a politics of discrimination and an economics of exclusion that jeopardizes their vulnerable families and voiceless children. They are now defenceless citizens who are desperately needy, cry for help, but aren't getting it.

Failure to show compassion

While reflecting on the Premier's failure to demonstrate comprehensive compassion for helpless Ontarians, I picked up the 1994 Common Sense Revolution document that has Mr. Harris smiling on the cover. I hope that the Premier, when he studies the latest poverty statistics, stops smiling, and

becomes dead serious about the tragedies that have been hitting Ontario. They are unacceptable from a moral, religious, spiritual, or a political point of view — from any point of view that is concerned about the well-being of the common people. The poverty, homelessness, hunger, and social discrimination that we see today is a matter of *conscience* that transcends fiscal self-interest and partisan power. The government must come to grips with this major scandal, as well as the Walkerton tragedy.

I sincerely hope, and so do many faith leaders and community spokespersons who form the Campaign Against Child Poverty, that the government will immediately take generous action. We appeal to the Premier to struggle with his conscience, to invite his Cabinet and Caucus to struggle with theirs, and to use the growing surplus to help desperate neighbors.

When we read the poverty and homelessness statistics, we must remember, and so

must our politicians, that numbers represent people. People with faces and feelings. People with families and children. People with lives and responsibilities.

People of conscience have the heart to act for the common good. The Premier could increase the budget of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, change the discriminatory regulations, and thus demonstrate: "My heart is with you. I do have a conscience. I will no longer smile, unless I have good reason to. I'm going to be very serious about the social injustices that have hit Ontario."

Such a change of heart would be welcomed by millions. It would show that the government has the conscience and the political will to practice a social-justice revolution that restores a real sense of human dignity and community to neighbors who are now being marginalized.

Gerald Vandezande
Scarborough, Ont.

Generous Christians are an asset

"If you give enough to Christian organizations, God will reward you with more abundant wealth than you can ever imagine." According to Tim Antonides this is *drivel*. (God wants you rich, CC December 25, 2000.)

If this is *drivel* why does it say in Malachi 3:10, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse ... and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."? Why did the Lord bless Abraham with riches? Why did Jacob prosper while working for Laban? Why did the Lord bless the latter part of Job's life more than the first? And why did Jesus tell the rich young ruler to "Sell everything you have and divide the money among the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven."? (Luke 18:22)?

It seems to me generous rich Christians are an asset to kingdom work.

Marian den Boer
Hamilton, Ont.

Why are we beating each other up?

I had to read the article by Tim Antonides (CC December 25th) a few times to see if I had misread it. I was surprised by his comments but on reflection those comments are sadly not only his.

In the last federal election we discovered just how intolerant Canada is of anyone who speaks up for his/her religious beliefs. An even sadder byline is that many in the religious community remained silent. In the U.S.A., athletes can still thank God on national TV without ridicule from the media. Yet Tim feels the need to criticize those who do declare that their talent is a gift of God and that Jesus Christ is their personal Savior. He then proceeds to add some very unflattering remarks about the Schuller TV show.

Why do we do that? Is it because we have never personally felt that secure about our faith to verbalize it in public like these individuals? We are so busy beating each other up internally we fail to notice that our worship style and content has caused a vast number of our members to leave.

Look at the statistics. Over half of our children, indeed, many of the children Tim is entrusted to teach, will leave the church.

While many Pentecostal churches are growing significantly, ministering to a harvest of broken souls, (See other article "Bald Truth") my church is criticizing them for their accomplishments. Some of our teens who have left the church may very well come back when he/she discovers that his sports hero is a Christian and has the courage to speak up about his belief in front of the entire country.

Upon hearing a Schuller-style positive spin message from a TV evangelist a close friend gave his life to the Lord. In the previous week he had contemplated suicide. Today he is a changed man and heads a men's ministry.

Do individuals who come to know the Lord as a result of a traumatic life experience and then share a sincere personal testimonial scare us? It's time we stop sitting on our hands and endorse these ministries. We have a lot to learn and we need to choose our words a bit more carefully when commenting on other ministries. Our children deserve better role models.

George Kloet
Oakville, Ont.

Criticism of 'Hour of Power' was 'mean-spirited'

In his article published under the above title in the December 25 edition of *Christian Courier* Mr. Tim Antonides decries the inappropriate connection by high profile athletes of their Christian faith to their athletic and financial success. I was rather disappointed when in the second half of the article Mr. Antonides launched a very personal and mean-spirited attack on Dr. Robert H. Schuller and "The Hour of Power" television program.

To describe the preaching of the Schullers as "drivel" is, I believe, inappropriate and to describe Rev. Robert A. Schuller as "the nauseatingly slick son" is insulting and therefore falls short of the

teaching of the part of the Bible quoted by Mr. Antonides about Christ humbling himself.

Mr. Antonides then appears to justify his knowledge of "The Hour of Power" by stating he "watched it a couple of times just for fun."

He probably should refrain from doing that if it leads him to write about people and organizations who are engaged in spreading the gospel in such a derogatory way. I am frankly a little surprised that *Christian Courier* would carry such a personal attack.

Bert Grasman
Moorefield, Ont.

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News/Education

Brutal civil war prompts cry for help from Sierra Leone families

Carol Thiessen

WINNIPEG, Man. (MCC) — Peter Koroma desperately wants to help his family.

The Winnipeg man's family has been traumatized by the brutal civil war that has raged in Sierra Leone since 1991. His older sister Digba Koroma along with his late brother's wife Martha Koroma and her five children now struggle to survive from day to day as refugees in neighboring Guinea. And Peter Koroma would love to bring them to Canada.

With the help of Mennonite church groups, Koroma, and other

Canadians from Sierra Leone, may soon be able to do that.

The Canadian government has recently launched a special program to expedite the private sponsorship of 3,000 refugees from Sierra Leone who have family living in Canada.

MCC hopes to resettle families

The Sierra Leone community in Canada has turned to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) for help in finding private sponsors.

MCC is hoping to resettle 15 families in both Ontario and Mani-

toba, 10 in Alberta and five in B.C.

"We're asking for a full sponsorship commitment," said Ed Wiebe, refugee coordinator for MCC Manitoba. "Others can help by offering financial support to the Sierra Leone community or by acting in partnerships with other local churches to provide a full sponsorship commitment."

Tim Wichert, refugee program coordinator for both MCC Canada and MCC Ontario, said the financial requirement will range from \$100 to \$1,500 a month, for a maximum of one year. The amount of financial support will depend on how much support the refugees' families in Canada can provide.

The families will also help orient their relatives to life in Canada. In most cases, the refugees

will settle near their families in large, urban areas.

"I will really be responsible for them. The help I'm looking for is mainly financial," said Koroma, who is married with three children. "That's why I'm seeking help from you guys. Because there's no way I can handle the load." Nathaniel Bimba, of MCC Alberta, said most of the refugees are educated and speak English. He said, given the chance, many will be able to start work soon after arriving in Canada.

Wiebe said once sponsors are in place, it will still take four to six months for the refugees to arrive in Canada.

"I'm hoping by spring time they should be here," said Koroma.

Koroma, who works for the

provincial Family Services department in Winnipeg, last saw his family during a 1988 visit back to Sierra Leone.

Since then his home village has been destroyed in the war, his family home burned to the ground, and his family forced to flee.

Koroma's younger brother (Martha's husband) was killed in the war. Other family members are missing.

Digba, Martha and her five children, have been staying as refugees in Guinea for almost five years, where there's growing violence against refugees. Koroma rents a home for them because the refugee camp is too dangerous for the women. He said they can't leave their home alone, for fear of police harassment.

Coral Ridge Ministries helps free Sudanese slaves

WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif. (EP) — Dr. D. James Kennedy, launched a campaign in November to liberate women and children held under brutal conditions as slaves in Sudan. The "Free the Slaves" drive was announced on "The Coral Ridge Hour," Kennedy's weekly nationwide television program, on Nov. 12, which was the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.

Sudan's 'Underground Railroad'

Coral Ridge Ministries is partnering with Christian Solidarity International, which freed 4,435 black African slaves between Sept. 5-11. The slaves returned to their homeland in Southern Sudan through an "Underground Railroad" involving local black African community leaders, seven networks of Arab retrievers and Christian Solidarity International. Since 1995, 38,418 slaves have been liberated by the ministry's slave redemption program. The program is controversial; critics say it creates an additional market for slave traders.

"Some people say we should not make this effort," Kennedy told Dan Wooding of ASSIST Communications. "But Christ's compassion compels us. I cannot walk on the other side and ignore my brothers needs. In all of my years in ministry I have never faced such a situation — the chance to express the compassion of Christ in such a profound way — for this is literally a matter of life and death for those who have been forced into the vicious life of slavery."

The new drive will raise funds to purchase the freedom of 2,000 black Africans, many of them

Christians and traditionalists who have been forcibly taken into bondage by government sponsored raids that sweep into villages. During the raids men are killed, village elders are hacked with machetes and left for dead, villages are burned and women and children are captured.

Subjected to torture

Many slaves are captured by the Sudan's armed forces, in particular the Popular Defense Forces (PDF). The slave raids take place in the context of the government of Sudan's declared *jihad* (Islamic holy war) against black African religious minorities. Returning slaves told of having been subjected by their masters to systematic physical and psychological torture, including gang rape, beatings, death threats, genital mutilation and forcible conversion to Islam.

"Christian Solidarity International praises the members of Coral Ridge Ministries and Dr. Kennedy for putting their faith into action in this national drive to free thousands of slaves in Sudan," said John Tayloe, executive director of Christian Solidarity International. "They are just not willing to stand by and watch the radical Muslim government of Sudan continue their practice of genocide and slavery. Their quick action will save the lives of many women and children and reunite families. For this we are grateful."

Christian Solidarity International is a Christian human rights organization working on behalf of victims of religious repression, victimized children, and victims of disaster. The Rev. Hans Stükelberger founded CSI in 1977, following silent demonstrations in support of persecuted Christians.

Door knob revelations

I'm not too swift. But it's not completely my fault. People come to me for help and they leave it up to me not only to have an answer, but to intuit the question as well. Being a campus minister is like being a private investigator some days. I have to sift through layers and layers of testimony to uncover the heart of the matter.

Emily (not her real name) came into my office with her charming smile and a friendly greeting. I've known her through her whole university career — ever since the first week when she came into my office crying. She was homesick then, and barely made it through the first few months. She really missed her family. Especially in this place where people smoked, got drunk, and did not acknowledge God in anything they did. But she made it through that stage, and she's grown deeper in faith and maturity since.

Today she had a question for me. "What did Jesus mean when he was talking about not putting new wine into old wineskins?"

To drink or not to drink

I got excited about this question, because it's rare that a student asks me something so forthrightly academic. Usually students are more concerned about personal issues. So I dived right in, explaining the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant. I even read an especially apt selection from one of my commentaries for her.

"So it has nothing to do with drinking alcohol?" she asked. "Do you think Christians should drink?"

Oh, ho! I thought. She wasn't after an exegesis of the verse after all. She was wrestling with the alcohol issue, but didn't want to say it outright. So I launched into a passionate creation-based biblical defense of drinking, quoting Psalm 104:15, Paul's charge to Timothy (5:23), and Jesus turning water into wine. She came back with some other verses that said otherwise, and eventually just stated, "Well, I don't want it in my house, because my grandfather was an alcoholic."

Campus Culture

Peter Schuurman



Well, that's another story altogether. This is a personal issue. I assured her that such a position was thoroughly understandable, and I just hoped that she could accept those who lived differently.

"Yeah, I do," she replied. "But it's hard when he's my boyfriend."

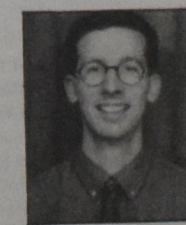
Circumlocutions and equivocations

"Aha!" I exclaimed, finally seeing the light. "That's why you came in here. You came to see me today to tell me you have a boyfriend. Not to understand that particular verse. Not to debate the use of alcohol. You have a boyfriend, and he drinks and you're not sure what to do about it because of your experience in your family. You like him but you're wondering what this means for the future. So you came in here to talk it over with me."

"Yes," she said with a smile. "But I have class now. I have to go. Bye."

"OK, but what's his name?" I asked. "I'm not telling yet," she said, leaving me alone in my study, not a little exasperated. I felt like a detective who just realizes he has been following false leads. Now the real work must begin.

Like I said, I'm not too swift. But it's not all my fault. Counselors talk about "door knob revelations." It's a phrase that captures what often happens to those in the helping professions: you spend an hour skirting around an issue with a person, and then just when time is up, the person drops the proverbial bomb. I venture to suggest, however, that this is worse in cases where faith is deep, as people can use spiritual talk to avoid confronting the real issues. Religion can be as much a hindrance as a help when people are hurting.



Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed campus chaplain at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont.

Arts/Media

Media musing

Ron Vandenburg

Now, I know that I'm not Bert Hielema. I haven't got his nose for news, but following in his tradition, my nose has been stuck in some media news lately...



Visual Bible Inc. has plans on producing word-for-word films on all 66 books of the Bible. They hope to become the provider of video/DVD versions of the Bible throughout the world, and have also produced English versions of the books of Matthew and of Acts and a Spanish version of the book of Matthew. Readily available in Christian bookstores and having sold over 560,000 copies, recently Visual Bible Inc. signed a deal that will also put their product in non-religious stores (ie. Everybody else). Right now in Morocco, they are filming the books of Mark, John and Luke which will feature Kevin Sage as Jesus, F. Murray Abraham as Peter and Paul Winfield as Mark.

Word-for-word begats?

I can see the dramatic retelling of the acts of the Apostles, and many films and plays have tried to show the suffering of the cross and celebration of the resurrection, but I can't help but wonder how filmmakers will tackle a word-for-word presentation of a long lists of begats, the Laws of Deuteronomy or the sayings of Proverbs. I look forward to Biblically accurate tellings of the books of Genesis and Exodus without the Cecil B. Demille touch (Yul Brenner was a great pharaoh, but Edward G. Robinson should have stuck to gangster films!). I think I may be first in line when Song of Solomon comes out.

Some Bible books lend themselves to film and continue to be a challenge to all epic storytellers. Others will be very difficult to interpret for the screen because of their subject matter and form. I don't blame filmmakers for working on the books that tell the best stories, because we Bible readers do the very same thing, ignoring or delaying to read many of the more difficult books, especially Old Testament ones. But maybe we should all encourage Visual Bible

Inc. to start production work on a Wisdom Literature series or one on the Minor Prophets. Maybe having a film version of these skipped-over books will encourage us to read along with our own Bibles.

321 Penguins

Phil Visscher and Mike Nawrocki, creators of *VeggieTales*, have recently tried to expand their audience and their own creative juices by introducing a new series called *321 Penguins*, a hilarious romp with four penguins Zidgel, Middel, Fiddel and Kevin. Zidgel is a la William Shatner, Middel is the banzai-trimming, daredevil pilot, Fiddel the scientist and Kevin is...well, as my son says, Kevin has a big bum.

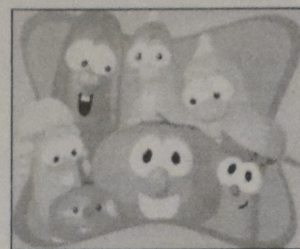


Zidgel, the fearless Penguin captain (top), and Fiddel, the scientist.

These flightless birds lead a young boy Jason to discover that patience is a virtue. In *VeggieTales*, Visscher and Nawrocki have always done a great job with value lessons and with *321 Penguins* they continue to show the faith reasons behind the values that we want our children to learn. With a setting reminiscent of

the Narnia series and sound track that reminds me of the best of Bugs Bunny, *321 Penguins* raises the standard for Christian children's entertainment. Here they show that having a good reason to tell a story makes a good story.

He's a decorative gourd



I finally discovered what kind of Vegetable Mr. Lunt is. He is a decorative gourd. But there should be a warning attached to Mr. Lunt. According to Mike Nawrocki, trying to eat Mr. Lunt would be dangerous, because he would splinter in your mouth.

Conversion in Stratford

The Stratford Festival promises another strong season by getting back to their Shakespearean offerings. *The Merchant of Venice* will prove interesting to watch, if only to see how in our politically correct society, the company can perform a play that ends with the Jewish main character forced to become a Christian. At its writing, conversion at all costs would have been the just and necessary thing to do. Who will be seen as the villain in this production?

Looking for crowd pleasers like last seasons *Fiddler on the Roof*, Richard Monette has chosen *The Sound of Music*. Putting the Stratford machine behind a light, fun, modern music has shown the versatility of the company's actors and hasn't hurt the box office receipts. The Shaw Festival is doing the same with a mainstage performance of *Peter Pan*. Just as when they go to see a movie, when they go to the theatre many people decide to see something that won't make them think or challenge their views. They want to have a good time.

A more important choice for Stratford is performing the *Making of a King* series, featuring *Henry IV* parts 1 and 2 and *Henry V*. Shakespeare's histories can be difficult for a theatre patron, but the coming-of-age struggles of Prince Hal, the fall of Falstaff, and Henry's courageous fight to unify his country could prove to be the best theatre of the season.

Lucky channels

Recently the federal regulators of the CRTC have picked the "lucky" channels that have the green light to become part of the digital age. What's being offered? Of the category one digital channels, the sixteen subject choices are Biography, Books, Computers, Fashion, Men, Mystery, Travel, Women's Sports, Documentaries, Land and Sea, Health, Independent Films, Youth, Issues, Gay and Wisdom TV. What is interesting is that the regulators chose smaller companies over many of the media powerhouses with the finances necessary to expand the 500 station digital TV market. With Rogers, CTV, Global getting some slim pickings and not necessarily getting all the channels they wanted, these channels might not be coming any time soon.

Vision TV expands

With the CRTC's announcement, Vision TV has expanded

with three new channels. First, the Wisdom Channel known as Body, Mind and Spirit will focus on "the interconnectedness of the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of life, on personal growth and spiritual development" says its website. It connects Canada's Vision TV with the U.S.'s Wisdom Media Group, which hopefully will expand production possibilities here in Canada. Vision will also produce a category two channel that will feature "spiritually inspired" world music and The Christian Channel which like any religious station in Canada can only be itself in prime time; the other time must be shared with a variety of faiths and religious perspectives.

Now all that needs to be done is to tie them into the best cable bundle available to the consumer. From the sixteen choices I've listed above, which do you think should be combined?



A scene from a Stratford Festival Theatre production of Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, featuring the character Sir John Falstaff (right).

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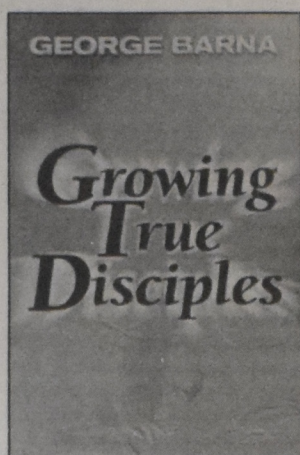
Church

'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few'

VENTURA, Calif. — Most Christians and Christian churches are familiar with Jesus' parting exhortation to make disciples of the world. However, according to a new book by researcher George Barna, entitled *Growing True Disciples*, the Christian Church in America is comprised of "many converts, but shockingly few disciples." This conclusion is based upon two years of research Barna conducted regarding the current state of discipleship, and how churches might enhance the effectiveness of their discipleship ministries. Barna also found, however, that there are churches doing effective discipleship, and the book contains a description of five different discipleship models currently used by such leading churches across the nation.

The state of discipleship

To get a sense of the current state of discipleship within the American Church, Barna conducted extensive research regarding the spiritual lives of adults and teenagers who have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ and who expect eternal salvation because of their confession of sins and acceptance of Christ as their savior — a group that Barna refers to as "born again Christians." Several large-scale national surveys



among random samples of these people revealed that the faith commitment of most born again believers is not very deep. Among the many examples of the shallowness of believer's faith that are cited in the book are the following:

When Christian adults were asked to identify their most important goal for their life, not a single person said it was to be a committed follower of Jesus Christ, or to make disciples of Christ.

Less than one out of every five born again adults had any specific and measurable goals related to their personal spiritual development.

Less than one per cent of all believers perceived a connection between their efforts to worship God and their development as a disciple of Jesus.

The most widely-known Bible verse among adult and teen believers is: "God helps those who help themselves," which is not in the Bible, and actually conflicts with the basic message of Scripture.

Minority believe in absolute truth

A minority of adult and teen believers contends that absolute moral truth exists.

Less than one out of every ten believers possesses a biblical worldview as the basis for his/her decision-making or behavior.

When given thirteen basic teachings from the Bible, only one per cent of adult believers firmly embraced all 13 as being biblical perspectives.

Research revealed specific and significant problems related to core spiritual practices such as worship, evangelism, stewardship, community service, and lifestyle.

According to Barna, most believers stated that their church does little to help them grow as a true disciple. "Few believers said that their church lacked programs, but most Christians complained that little is done to effectively moti-

vate and facilitate their development as genuine, fervent followers of Christ. Our surveys among pastors showed that they dismissed such views as excuses and as inaccurate, but the bottom line remains unchanged: most Christians are simply not making progress in their personal spiritual development."

The research also identified nine substantial obstacles that seem to prevent individuals and churches from having a more satisfying discipleship experience. Among the barriers to spiritual growth described in the book are the tendencies to focus on Bible knowledge (i.e., memorize verses, know the stories of key biblical personalities) but not character development; the lack of a clear and specific idea of what meaningful discipleship is; and unrealistic expectations regarding the role of small groups in the disciple-making process.

Barna acknowledged that most churches have many programs and classes that represent the discipleship effort. "Offering programs is not the issue. We discovered that surprisingly few churches have a well-conceived model of discipleship that they implement. The result is that churches feel they have fulfilled their obligation if they provide a broad menu of courses,

events, and other experiences, but such a well-intentioned but disjointed approach leaves people confused and imbalanced."

Five effective models

One of the most unique parts of the book is the description of five effective discipleship models currently in use in churches. Barna explained that his motivation for describing the models was not to encourage churches to adopt one of those models, but to challenge them to clarify their disciple-making philosophy and strategies.

"There is no single approach that is right for all churches. However, every church must determine a comprehensive model of facilitating personal spiritual maturity. It is the individual's responsibility to grow, but it is the church's privilege to assist them in that process. The five models we studied are approaches that work well for the churches using them. The real challenge for every church is to define a clear, comprehensive and effective model for discipleship that it consistently implements." The models described were included to spark a greater level of creative and strategic thinking among church leaders.

Source: Barna Research Group, Ventura, Calif., 2000, www.barna.org

A new generation of missionaries

URBANA, Ill. (Religion Today) — Nearly 20,000 young Christians spent the end of the year at Urbana 2000, one of the world's most comprehensive Christian mission fairs, held every three years. It puts young Christians who are thinking about their future in contact with career missionaries and a spectrum of mission agencies.

More than 18,500 college students and young adults converged on the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for the Dec. 27-31 convention. Sponsors are InterVarsity Christian Fellowship chapters in the United States and Canada as well as various evangelical campus ministries. About 15,000 of the young people were from the United States, 1,500 from Canada, and the rest from 115 other countries.

More than 325 mission agencies and 50 seminaries and Christian colleges sent representatives to answer questions from students who want to serve God in outreach ministries and are curious about what missions groups are doing. More than 200 seminars provided

information about ministries.

"We begin a lot of relationships with people who attend Urbana," said Kristofer Fegengbush of Latin America Mission. "Through time spent with attendees and significant conversations, we help to begin the process that leads to missionary service."

"A lot of students are saying they want to serve God with their whole life, but don't know quite where that will take them," Phil Evans, an InterVarsity spokesman, told Religion Today. "They are open to exploring."

Urbana is meant to launch a whole generation of missionaries into various careers and ministries at home and abroad over the next 5 or 10 years, Evans said.

Impressive crop of young people

Evans said he has been impressed by this year's crop of young people. "Their commitment and passion are as strong as any recent student generation I've seen," said Evans, attending his sixth Urbana convention since 1984. The first convention was held in

Toronto in 1946.

The worship has been "quite incredible," Evans said. One goal of the speakers was to help the young people realize that "worship" doesn't have to stop when the music ends, he said. Individual ministry can be thought of as simply an extension of corporate worship, he said. "Worship is mission and missions is worship."

Ethnically diverse

The convention was "very ethnically diverse," Evans said. Almost 40 per cent of its participants were non-white, including about a quarter who are Asian, he said. More than 800 African Americans, 700 Hispanics, and a large group of self-described biracial young Christians attended.

"The commitment to seeing the church in America racially diverse and racially reconciled is very much a part of the program" at Urbana, Evans said. "Students really want to step up and be the generation that deals with racial reconciliation."

Much more so than previous generations, young Christians

have grown up with people who are different from them racially and ethnically, Evans said. Now they want to serve in cross-cultural situations, such as being a missionary in a foreign nation or an ethnic community in the United States.

Young Christians are "dealing with the idea of differences head-on," Evans said. Eighteen hundred student-led small groups met all over the campus every morning, and, according to reports Evans received, "the students re-

ally were praying through issues of cultural differences. It's a great first step in understanding."

Modern young Christians also tend to have more of a global perspective and realize how interrelated the world is, he said. They understand that "God's heart is for the nations, all nations."

Related Links: http://www.urbana.org/_u2000.cfm
<http://www.youthspecialties.com/convention/bios/Speakers/salter-mcneil.html>

Charities rated for efficiency

(Religion Today) — *Smart Money* magazine has come out with its efficiency rankings for the nation's 100 largest charities. The rankings are based on three years of financial data that considered how much money was allocated to programs, fund-raising, and savings.

The most efficient charities in the "Religion" category were Samaritan's Purse, Wycliffe Bible Translators, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Focus on the Family, and Campus Crusade for Christ.

The most efficient in the "Relief" category were International Rescue Committee, U.S. Fund for UNICEF, Catholic Relief Services, CARE USA, and Christian Children's Fund.

Church

Episcopalians, Lutherans celebrate unity agreement

(Religion Today) — Two Protestant denominations made history this month. Members of the Episcopal Church in the U.S.A. and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America celebrated a unity agreement that took four decades of dialogue to reach.

Known as "Called to Common Mission," it lets Episcopalians and Lutherans receive communion in each other's parishes, call either an Episcopal or Lutheran minister as their pastor, or share a pastor. Churches also can cooperate in a variety of ministries.

In the Los Angeles area, hundreds of congregants celebrated Dec. 31 by parading between St. Edmund's Episcopal Church in San Marino and Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, three blocks away. They stopped traffic as they crossed a busy street, and some blew horns or banged on tambourines along the way, the *L.A. Times* reported.

National celebration

The national celebration took place Jan. 6 in Washington, D. C., where leaders of the two denominations will preside at a communion service at the National Cathedral, an Episcopal church.

Lutherans ratified "Called to Common Mission" in 1999 and Episcopalians in 2000. The agreement recognizes that the churches have much in common theologically, since both emerged from the

Protestant Reformation in the 16th century. But their traditions are different: Lutheran traditions are rooted in Germany, Episcopal traditions in England. The denominations have 7.5 million members.

Not a merger

The agreement is not a merger. The denominations will maintain separate organizations. One difference is the Episcopal belief that bishops are part of an unbroken line of succession from Jesus' apostles, called the "historic episcopate." Anglican churches teach that the historic episcopate is an essential element of the church and insist that pastors can be ordained only by a bishop.

Lutheran churches in some parts of the world embrace the historic episcopate, but many do not, allowing pastors to be ordained by other pastors or a bishop. Mark Chavez, leader of the Word Alone Network, which opposes the agreement, told Religion News Service that it is based on "a false unity" that violates Lutheran traditions. The denomination will meet in August to try to reach a compromise on the issue of the historic episcopate.

Lutherans have made similar ecumenical agreements in the past with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the United Church of Christ, and the Reformed Church in America.

Salvation Army not welcome in Moscow

(Religion Today) — The Salvation Army is homeless in Moscow. The ministry has been evicted from its church building and told to vacate its offices in another building, according to CNS, an Internet news service. Landlords took action immediately after the Dec. 31 deadline requiring religious groups to register with the government. Moscow officials had refused to register the Army, considering it a militaristic organization.

Searching for new space

"It was rather sad to have to tell people [at the Dec. 31 church service], 'This is our last day here, we don't know where we'll be next week,'" Col. Kenneth Baillie, head of the organization in Russia, told CNS. Workers are searching

for new office space, Baillie said. A ministry to the needy has been shut down and as a result "the seniors were just cut off," he said. Ministries to prisoners, drug and alcohol addicts, neglected children, and AIDS sufferers, might also be shut down.

"We have entered a kind of legal 'Never-Never Land,'" Baillie said. The ministry will continue to exist until the city asks the courts to have it liquidated, which could take months, he said. Baillie hopes an application to register the Army nationally as a "centralized religious organization" will clear the way for work to resume in Moscow. The group successfully registered in St. Petersburg, Petrozavodsk, Volgograd, Rostov-on-Don, and Vyborg, CNS reported.

Is God pregnant with evil?

"God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.... Behold, he travelleth with iniquitie, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood." (Ps 7: 11, 14, KJV)

"God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day.... He who is pregnant with evil and conceives trouble gives birth to disillusionment." (Ps 1:11, 14, NIV)

A comparison of these two translations of verses 11 and 14 of Psalm 7 highlights three significant points about biblical language and biblical translations. The first point is that the King James Version is today almost always read in a significantly modernized edition. The so-called "King James Version" which is sold in bookstores today is not the same as the original Bible published under the auspices of James I in 1611. For one thing, the current modern editions remove the more than 100 pages containing the Apocrypha. For another, the chapter headings and marginal notes of the original version have been removed. (On the beginning of verse 11, for example, the 1611 edition has the note: "Or, God is a righteous judge," thus anticipating the NIV translation.)

Furthermore, modern editions routinely modernize the spelling, so that the original of verse 14, reproduced above, becomes "Behold he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood." Especially the change from "travelleth" to "travaileth" introduces an important clarification in the text which was not part of the original KJV. The text is speaking, not about someone "going on a trip" with iniquity, but of "giving birth" to iniquity.

Cross-gender imagery

It is the image of giving birth which highlights the second point which these verses illustrate. Whether we read "he travaileth" or "he who is pregnant," it is clear that the text here is an example of "cross-gender imagery," a kind of figure of speech whereby feminine characteristics are attributed to a masculine subject (or vice versa). Here a masculine person is said to "become pregnant" and "give birth." This way of speaking is quite common in the Bible, as when God is compared to a she-bear (Hos 13:8), or the apostle Paul to a mother (Gal 4:19).

The third point is the identity of the masculine subject of this cross-gender imagery. Is it God or man? If we read the King James Version, it seems

Chapter & Verse

Al Wolters

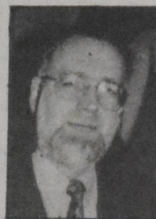


as though the answer is God. Clearly, God is the subject of verse 11, as he apparently is of the intervening verses 12 and 13, which describe God's righteous judgment on the wicked. The "he" of verse 14 would then also, according to ordinary grammatical usage, seem to refer to God. But clearly this cannot be right. It would contradict everything we know about God from the Bible (and from the rest of this Psalm) to say that he "is pregnant with evil," that he "conceives trouble," and that he "gives birth to disillusionment." The problem is not with the feminine imagery, but with the depiction of God as an evil person. Surely the psalmist cannot mean that!

When theology trumps philology

However, if we read the NIV, the evil person is not God but man. This fits with the subsequent verses, which also clearly refer to human sinners. It is true that the NIV rendering ("He who is pregnant... gives birth...") is not the most natural or obvious sense of the original Hebrew, but it is not impossible, and it is in all likelihood what the psalmist intended. This is a case where theological assumptions clearly — and I believe appropriately — take precedence over strict grammar in translating the Bible.

I hasten to add, however, that legitimate examples of this sort are rare. Usually we must be very careful not to let our "theological" assumptions — that is, our understanding of biblical teaching as a whole — get in the way of accepting the most obvious philological construal of a particular sentence in the Bible. There are too many examples of agenda-driven exegesis which massages the biblical text to say something which fits an interpreter's preconceptions. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that sometimes an interpreter's preconceptions (for example, that God is not evil) may rightly tip the scales in making a philological judgment.



Al Wolters teaches Bible and Greek (this year Hebrew too) at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario. He recommends to his readers one of his prized possessions: *The Holy Bible, 1611 Edition, King James Version. A word-for-word reprint of the First Edition of the Authorized Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993).

Church in China in need of foreign teachers

(Religion Today) — China's Christians need foreign Bible teachers to help them grow in the faith, underground church leaders say. "Our movement grows by 20 per cent each year, but out of 1200 leaders, barely 50 have been Christians for more than four years," a leader told Compass Direct News Service. Of those 50, only 20 have received extensive Bible training, he said.

"We must have foreign teachers to come and help us ground ourselves in the Scriptures, otherwise we may become unorthodox, or a cult," the leader said. Some house church movements have departed from orthodox Christian doctrine because of a lack of biblical teaching, according to news reports.

The communist government doesn't help the situation. "Ironically, the government is

always telling us we must not become cults. But their policy makes that more likely, because it prevents us from teaching new converts the truth of the Christian faith," the leader said.

Regulations forbid foreign religious workers from distributing Bibles or conducting religious activities.

Reflection/Agriculture

He leads me



GARO NALBANDIAN

A shepherd and his flock on Gebel Mukabber, south of Jerusalem.

Lee Hill-Nelson

One hot summer day, I was sitting on a hard bench in a country church leafing through the hymnbook. I was in grade one.

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," intoned the preacher.

I shall not want the Lord?

I came to attention. What did he say? I shall not want the Lord? But aren't we supposed to want the Lord for everything? Such thoughts went through my six-year-old mind, but I never asked anyone about the meaning of the verse. I didn't understand it, I didn't ask.

I don't remember when I learned there is another meaning for "want." As years passed, Psalm 23 became important to me. Perhaps because the words of the Psalm had puzzled me or maybe just because I was a country girl, the green pastures and still waters helped me see a beautiful picture and love the Psalm.

The Lord is my shepherd. . . I will fear no evil for you are with me [Psalm 23:1,4b (NIV)] became my prayer for protection as a teenager and young adult as I faced hurts and temptations. God was near throughout those times.

In later years, as friends and I drove through the Judean Hills in Israel, I compared the scene of shepherds leading flocks to pastures and waters with memories of when I was young in west Texas and drove cows to pastures and waters. Cows would never have

followed me; they paid no attention to my voice. Sometimes they'd try to go in all directions. In Israel, the sheep followed in a line behind their shepherd — and when he spoke, they obeyed.

At a time when doctors could not diagnose an illness and when opening my eyes took too much strength and I was so weak that I could not think of what to pray, I repeated Psalm 23 over and over. The quiet waters cleansed my mind, the green grass, soft and fragrant, became my bed.

Some may think it strange a woman I hardly knew called one evening and asked if she could pray Psalm 23 with me on the telephone. God has said, "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you." (Heb. 13:5b) and he didn't. The prayer of this woman brought comfort and peace.

After I healed, a Stephen Ministry training program began in our church. It seemed a way to give back to God a bit of the love he'd given me. I joined the program.

One of my first care receivers was a 92-year-old woman in a nursing home. During our first time together, she talked about her youth, for those are years remembered best. When it was time for me to leave, she said, "I want to say the 23rd Psalm." She repeated it, never missing a word. And so a pattern was set for all my visits with this lady.

Four years later, she sleeps nearly all the time, doesn't recognize me, and no longer carries on a conversation. Yet each time when

The Lord gives/
the Lord takes
away

A week before Christmas our house burned.

My thoughts immediately flew back to the trials of my grandfather — and Job. Not that our troubles compare.

Grandpa Gleddie, as a young Norwegian immigrant, homesteaded in the Wisconsin woods. He moved away from there in 1909 with his wife and three children when their house burned to the ground. They took out a second homestead, this time in southern Alberta, where there were no trees to root out. My grandmother unknowingly had contracted diphtheria before leaving Wisconsin to join her husband in Canada. Within a short time of arriving at the Alberta homestead she died and was buried on a wind-swept hilltop behind the house. Because of quarantine laws, burial was not allowed in the cemetery and mourners stood well off during the burial ceremony.

Fire returns

A few years later, remarried and with three more children, grandfather watched his new barn burn down along with tools, harnesses and a winter's supply of hay. His children remember him standing helplessly by and quoting Job: "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised."

Early on a Saturday morning we discovered our house to be on fire. I called my son from next door to come and help. His wife phoned people to help and to pray. We hauled out photo albums, papers, books and furniture — whatever we could grab before the smoke drove us out. Flames were shooting up from the roof by the time firefighters began arriving from local towns. Four fire departments answered our call and forty firemen worked through most of the day to extinguish the fire. Wind-chill was equivalent to -40 degrees and two pumper trucks froze up. Firefighters rotated in shifts into the basement of the other house on the farm to thaw out and be refreshed by food and drink supplied by family and neighbors. The fire crews were all volunteers but they did a thorough and professional job.

Grace and goodwill

Neighbors and friends from the city arrived soon after the firefighters. The phone hardly stopped ringing for days. Catastrophes allow people to demonstrate grace and good will. We have

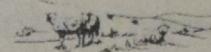
I am ready to leave, I ask her to pray the 23rd Psalm. She smiles and prays, "The Lord is my shepherd..." Seldom does she miss a word.

In her book, *What the Bible is All About*, Henrietta C. Mears wrote: "When you find yourself in deep need, you can always find a Psalm that expresses your inmost feeling." Psalm 23 continues to serve that purpose for me.

Though the bench was hard and my six-year-old mind wandered, I'm glad I was at church that day. I am glad the Preacher read Psalm 23.

COUNTRY COUNTERCULTURE

VERN M. GLEDDIE



benefited greatly from the help received during and after the fire. Our children took us into their home. We heard no lectures as did Job from his friends, only sympathy and prayers. But then we have not lost everything either as did Job.

We were able to handle the loss philosophically and emotionally for the most part. Sometimes, however, when condolences and gifts were offered emotions welled up and tears spilled over. Christmas Eve we were in church with our children and grandchildren for a candlelight service. The pastor called us forward to receive expressions of sympathy and a gift. My wife began to express her thanks and a lump in her throat stopped her. I also tried to speak but could not.

A year of losses

This has been a year of losses for us. Most grievous was the death of one of my sisters to cancer the end of November. A serious health problem has invaded the life of one of our sons. In October, the prairie ranch where I had put down roots early in life was sold out of the family to pay out a cousin suing his brother and father.

A true observation of one of Job's friends is that "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards." "Life is tough", but "God is good" was the message given at my sister's funeral using texts marked accordingly ("L.T." and "G.G.") in her Bible.

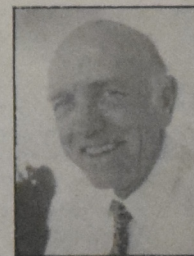
I am thankful for a faithful God who has sustained us through the generations. We don't deserve the good things in life, yet God is pleased to "put a hedge about" those who serve Him and to "bless the work of (their) hands".

Though I don't measure up to God's description of Job — "blameless and upright" — I am thankful that through Jesus, God sees me that way, too. By God's grace I can say with Job, "Though

He slay me, yet I will hope in Him", and the quote used in Handel's Messiah, "I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end He will stand upon the earth".

Bible quotations from Job (NIV)

Vern Gleddie has a sheep ranch near Edmonton, Alta.



Diamond Bread

Marion Schoeberlein

Snow is falling.

Diamond bread.

You can eat it off the ground.

Castles are built from it.

Children's dreams inside the flakes.

Snow is falling.

Winter beads.

Poets' poems. Artists' pictures.

Your heart can hold it like a Christmas thing.

God is making fairy tales.

Evangelism

The first catechism class

Hans Uittenbosch

Although it is still an astonishing development, the Christian community is getting used to the idea that thousands of Bibles and New Testaments are being distributed in countries which were formerly under communist control.

Suddenly everyone got into the act. Agencies and individuals, both bona fide and spurious ones, raced through hastily opened borders with the Word of God, in- and on-hand.

Hoarding, selling Bibles

On board ships — that's where I work — some people became Bible collectors, hoarding Bibles which were offered to them in different ports. I used to worry about that. I suspected some seafarers of hoarding Bibles to sell them on the black market at a handsome profit. Imagine, Bibles you paid for with your hard-earned mission dollars being sold for 10 times their cost on the black market! But then I figured, who knows: they might get read in the process. And didn't St. Paul say somewhere: "If some preach Christ out of envy and some out of conviction, it makes no difference as long as Christ is preached." Good, common sense advice.

But there is something else. Something found not only in former communist countries. It's a far more general malady. The Bible is often used only as a symbol, a relic, an icon, a religious artifact, instead of as the Word of God addressing man in his deepest need.

Catechism: a good Reformed word

This is where the wealth of the Reformed tradition can be of help. We've got something called the catechism. That's a good Reformed — and for that matter also a Roman Catholic — word. Webster defines it simply as "oral instruction." Perhaps this definition came from Romans 9: "How shall they hear without a preacher?"

So, along with the extensive programs of Bible distribution, we should also support their interpretation through catechetical instruction. The Spirit's directive to Philip to catechize the Ethiopian eunuch who had picked up and was trying to read a copy of the Bible is a case in point.

Another one I ran into myself only a few months ago.

On my way up to the Master's cabin on a Bulgarian freighter, I noticed obvious preparations being made for a noon-day luncheon party for ship's agents and shore officials.

Apologizing for interrupting



Rev. Hans Uittenbosch (second from right) and his wife onboard a Korean vessel with crew members.

his busy schedule, I entered the Master's cabin and indicated that I just wanted to greet him and shake his hand. Though he was in the process of signing documents for the ship's chandler seated across from him, the captain urged me to take a seat as well. Somewhat reluctantly, I sat down. I had spent almost the entire morning with different officers and crew members on this vessel already, and, to be quite candid, on my way down to this Bulgarian hulk carrier, I had spotted another ship about a mile upriver. It was a Dutch ship at that.

The noon-hour on a Dutch vessel can be an opportune time for a presentation of the Gospel, since the officers always observe an almost 'sacred' tradition of gathering together for a drink before lunch. Often I have been able to speak openly and at length about the claims of Christ in precisely that sort of setting. So I really wanted to get to that vessel.

Gentle hints of the Spirit

But over the years I have also learned to listen a bit more carefully to the 'gentle hints' of the Spirit of God in this ministry on board ships.

The captain's insistence that I sit down was such a hint. When the ship's chandler was finished with his business, the captain came away from behind his desk, sat down across from me and without much introduction began to trace his spiritual history.

It was fraught with pain, perplexity and frustration. Deep down in the very bones of many (former)

communists there has always been an awareness that there is more between heaven and earth than meets the eye.

Some 20 years ago, the captain told me, he had wanted to see his son baptized — not out of covenantal conviction, but, contrary to the baptismal form's warning, out of superstition. The child was sickly, listless and growing very poorly. Who knows, he reasoned, perhaps the baptism might turn his son's health around. So he decided to have the child baptized. The decision was against his own father's advice, who feared that he would imperil his position and promotion as a young naval officer.

As a member of the communist party and as a junior officer at the time, he was well aware that he had to proceed with extreme caution and in strict secrecy, for his father's advice was not without foundation.

So he took the child with its mother and his mother-in-law on a two-day journey into a mountainous region, where he knew of a monastery. In an adjacent village, he settled down for the night in the only hotel. As he went out for a stroll the following morning, he ran into — of all people — his own neighbor who was vacationing in the area.

He decided, therefore, to let his wife and her mother go to the monastery alone with the child, fearing that his own entrance would be reported, which would have had disastrous consequences.

The boy was baptized. Curiously he picked up dramatically.

He grew strong and healthy and developed into a very capable young man. And today he attends church — on his own.

Still feeling the pain

But his father still felt the pain of the dilemma he faced more than 20 years ago. In an attempt to find consolation, he had started to read the Bible — a very old Bible. In fact, so old, he said to me, it was used in the days of King James I. He had found it in some seafarers centre. Would I wish to see it?

As I examined it, he continued: "I do not understand it too well, but then, I am still reading in the

'history of the world section' (Genesis). That's how far he had read — to Genesis 21 to be exact. Can you blame him? Doesn't everyone read a book, any book, from beginning to end?

The Bible is different

True, everyone does, I said, but with the Word of God there is a difference.

That made him curious. Since he spoke fluent Russian, we now examined together the index of a Russian Bible I had brought with me, and with great care, with pen and marker, noted the individuality of the Bible books as well as the history and plan of salvation revealed in the Scriptures.

As my thoughts of a noon-hour discussion on board the Dutch vessel were swallowed up by the immediate circumstances of ushering someone into the secrets of the history of salvation in Christ Jesus, I noticed that another engagement had been forgotten as well.

Three times someone knocked and entered the captain's quarters. First, the chief steward, then the chief engineer, and finally someone from the shipping agency. They all had the same message: the visitors had all arrived and the luncheon party was in progress. Could the Master please come down and assume his role as host?

Ever so politely, yet firmly, the captain responded that he would be delayed since he had some "very important business" to attend to first: his first Catechism class.

The Rev. Hans Uittenbosch is Chaplain General with International Seafarers Ministry, and founder of the Christian Reformed Seafarers Centre in Montreal.

Texas churches plan Jesus video blitz

DALLAS, Texas (Religion Today) — A copy of the Jesus video will be placed in every mailbox in Texas. The mailing to 8.4 million homes is the largest ever for the 83-minute film that depicts the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Several other states have had smaller drives.

"We're not out to bug people, we're out to make a difference," Lee Miller, spokesman for the project, told *The Dallas Morning News*. "People can either choose to look at the video or ignore it." The project is expected to cost \$21 million, and \$5 million has been raised from 400 churches.

People who respond to the video can call an 800 number, log onto the Internet, or return a postcard for a follow-up call from a church, according to the newspaper. Organizers said they hope that, based on results from other states, as many as 4 million people will convert or return to Christianity after watching the film. The follow-up from churches will be the key to success, said Hollis Kirkpatrick, a Southern Baptist who is helping to organize the drive.

Prayer

Who will pray for me?

Gail Strock

I couldn't ignore the rich baritone voice that filled the sanctuary with song. I couldn't help be awed by his impressive voice (he leaned away from the microphone during the song's most intense moments) or his size. Once a powerful music recording executive in Nashville, he was a big man, a man who'd walked away from it all to become a pastor to several little known congregations in Central Pennsylvania.

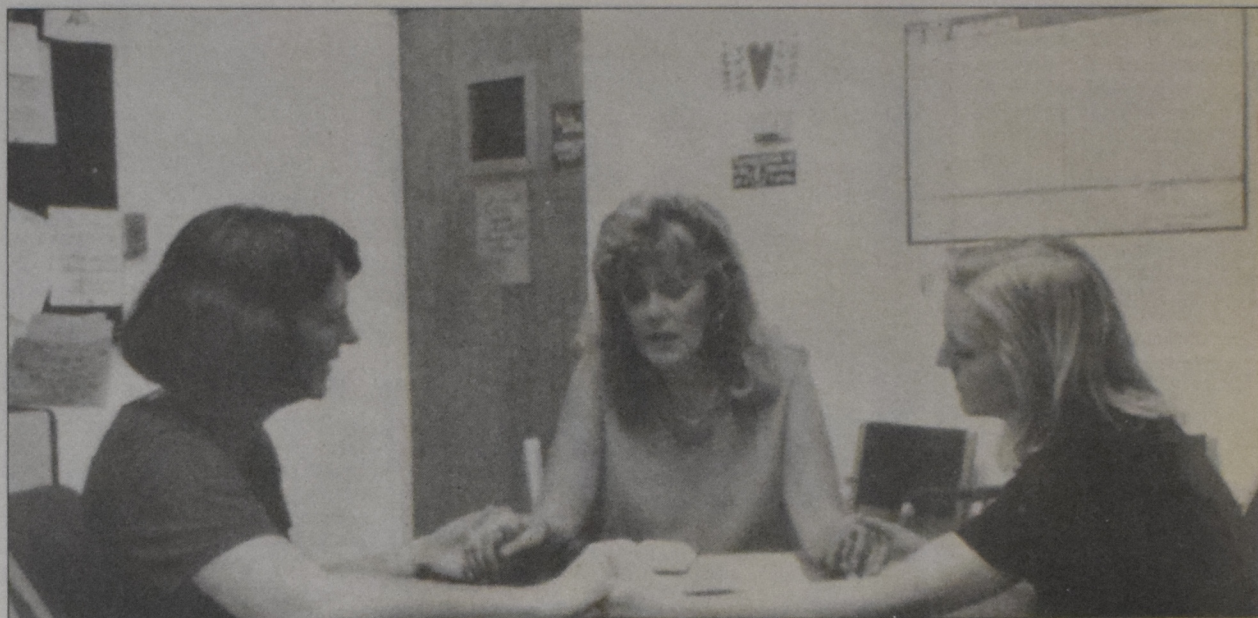
His story began in Nashville with him lying on a cold floor, pain from a heart attack racking his body, concerned faces looking down at him.

It's a horrible feeling, he told us that evening, to lie there, possibly dying, and no one around you even thinks to pray for you. It never entered their minds.

Surrounded by praying people

So he pushed the stop button on his life in Nashville and pushed play again when he arrived in central Pennsylvania. He needed to be surrounded by people who would pray for him.

I know my father prayed for me. As a lithe, spry ten-year-old, I'd fairly flown up the stairs of our old farmhouse one evening, rounded the corner, and slipped into my parents' bedroom for some long forgotten object, only to find my father on his knees at bedside. Sensing my presence too late and embarrassed, he quickly rose and slipped beneath the covers. Was it because I'd caught him in his underwear? Or because he'd been



RANDY NYTHOF, CHRISTIAN HOME & SCHOOL

I'm letting their excellent Sunday school teachers teach them how to pray. I'm teaching them why.

on his knees praying — something rarely heard of.

Desperate prayers

I know my mother prayed too; although I picture her prayers as more desperate — as would be when raising four teenagers. And, later in her life, as cancer ate every last ounce of her energy, we prayed for her. We'd obviously grown beyond "Now I lay me down to sleep," but this simple prayer of faith — "my soul to take" — took on new meaning.

Now, in midlife, I ask, Who will pray for me? As I grow to

dread the thought of old age and declining health or if I've simply had a bad day, who will care enough to pray? I can't make the people around me pray, as I'm sure our Nashville friend wanted to do. But I can influence those closest to me. So I've decided to give myself peace of mind. I've decided to take out a sort of selfish insurance policy: I'm teaching my sons the importance of praying.

As necessary as breathing

Notice I said "the importance of praying" — an action verb. I'm letting their excellent Sunday school

teachers teach them *how* to pray. I'm teaching them *why*. It's an act of faith, communing with God, and as necessary to life as breathing.

I tell our sons that God hears their every thought and cares very deeply about them. Our youngest son always had trouble falling asleep at night. Creepy scenes, real or imagined, would fill the blank screen in front of his closed eyelids. So after he'd rattled off "Now I lay me..." and "God Bless..." faster than needed, I told him to start listing in his mind all the things he was thankful for. Make it a long list, I told him, for all good

things in your life.

My purpose was twofold. To instill in him the peace felt when talking with God, and to replace those scary scenes with something so rote, he'd become bored and fall asleep. I don't know how thoroughly he followed my suggestion or whether our teenagers now crave prayer as much as they crave food. But when our oldest son left for school one morning with an exam weighing heavily on his mind, he said with a sideways grin, "Pray for me Mom."

And in this I find hope.

"Let's pray ..."

Walt Brouwer

I am not a doctor. My wife's one. I'm merely a medical layman, uh ... layperson. Professionally, I'm a man ... darn! ... person of the cloth.

The following true incident happened not long after our second son was born. My wife and I determined that our quiver was small and thus decided that we would forgo having any more progeny. Consequently, another decision had to be made: *Who is going to get "fixed?"* — if you'll pardon my lack of medical lingo.

Safer, simpler, sensible

My wife quickly and rather suddenly overwhelmed me with her extensive professional knowledge on this delicate subject. Moreover, she used a degree of eloquence and

persuasive argument that I had heretofore been complete stranger to. *It's safer, simpler and more sensible for the male to undergo the procedure*, she posited. She cited studies and statistics with an ease and rapidity that would make a corner vendor flogging her corn-dogs see green with envy.

A preacher left speechless

She had left even me — a preacher — speechless! For the first time in my career I faced a situation where eight years of intensive theological education rendered me utterly without hope. She had me cornered. Finally, after days of soul-searching I relented. We both agreed — though she more readily than I: the knife was to befall me.

Yet, giving credit where credit

is due, she really did try to cheer me up. She promised to refer me to the best urologist she knew. She added one caveat though: this specialist was an agnostic who was religiously devoted to the cause. I knew these creatures existed and had even met them on occasion. I had come to figure that the reason they and their atheist friends exhibit such a keen need to talk about the God they don't believe in is because they have no one to talk to when they're alone. I also figured that as long as he plied his trade well and on sound medical principles, I really didn't think his metaphysical musings mattered.

Calvinistic doctor

Sure enough, on the day of the appointment, after the examination of the area of concern was

completed and I was ushered into the consultation room for a conference, the doctor ventured into a deterministic theology that he typified as Calvinistic. By this time, however, being somewhat sore to the core and more clearly visualizing the delicacy of what lay ahead, I was in no mood to debate a point of theology that would have no pastoral merit. Sensing my reluctance, we set a date for the big day.

That day arrived much more quickly than I expected or desired. Yet, sensing the need to walk my talk, I obeyed by thoroughly and duly preparing myself for the scalpel and showing up at the appointed hour.

You can imagine my surprise when, laying fully prepped on the table, I heard the competent yet

agnostic physician say, "*Let's pray.*" I shook my head, thinking that perhaps the local anesthetic had traveled up to my head. Was I mistaken, or was this man converted simply by having been in my presence? You can imagine my confusion. I wondered, *Were my own professional services called upon at this hour of need?* Yet a second time I heard him utter the words, "*Let's pray.*" I raised my head to see what would be next. It was then that I observed the attending nurse pick up what my wife later told me — that is, when she finally recovered from laughter — was an antiseptic to spray the exposed area.

Walt Brouwer is the pastor of Christ Community Church in Nanaimo, B.C.

Film Review

Cast Away — great film or great commercial?

Cast Away

Rated PG. Stars Tom Hanks, Helen Hunt.

Written by William Broyles, Jr.

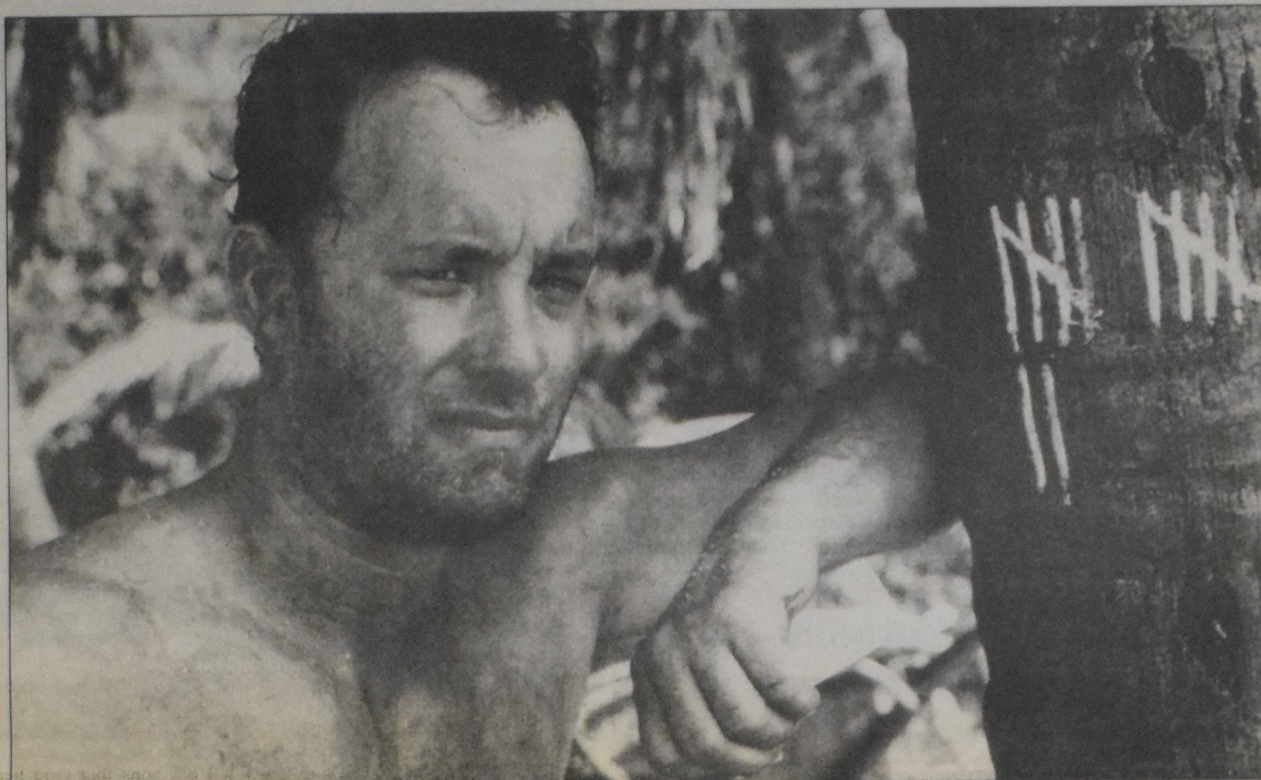
Directed by Robert Zemeckis

Reviewed by Ron Vandenburg

Warning! The following article begins with a frustrated rant including a spoiler to the movie. Please jump down to paragraph two for a complete review of the movie.

Rant: Before I saw this movie, I knew all the major plot devices. Why? The director Robert Zemeckis gave away all of it in the trailer of the movie. We know how the main character is stranded, we see some amazing visuals that should have been saved for the movie, and... at this point if you

Chuck the motivational speaker yells out to Russian Federal Express workers, "Let us not commit the sin of turning our back on time!"



A forlorn-looking Hanks, stranded on his desert island.

didn't see the trailer and don't know what happens, skip down to the review, do it now... are they all gone?... we know that he survives and returns home. The survival of the main character should have remained in question for the audience. A trailer is supposed to entice us without giving us all the facts.

An insult to under-25 males

Zemeckis defends the trailer by saying that the core movie audience, males under 25, want to know what to expect. He has been quoted, saying, "There's a McDonald's on every street corner and none of them is losing money. Nobody's going to the Mom and Pop restaurant and taking a chance." He stated that a trailer that gives away everything is "a necessary marketing strategy." I hope all males under 25 will be insulted by this Hollywood perception of their mental capacity. The largest group of risk-takers in our population don't seem to want to risk a few bucks and few hours unless the film has numerous explosions, gunfire or sex jokes.

The year 2000 was one of the best years financially for theatres, but critically it was considered one of the worst. Moviemakers understand that they cannot take any risks themselves and that

movie-goers will tolerate poorly produced films. That being said, *Cast Away* is not a poorly produced movie and did not deserve such a trailer.

O.K... now I feel better with that off my chest.

Review: Early in the film, we see busy, busy Federal Express employee Chuck Nolan (Tom Hanks) race around the world. With the aid of a translator, Chuck the motivational speaker yells out to Russian Federal Express workers, "Let us not commit the sin of turning our back on time!"

Product placement galore

Product placement has been a visual evil in big budget films. We see the Dr. Pepper can in the main character's hand or the Pizza Hut restaurant in the background. Few companies have received more on screen time than Federal Express has in this movie. We see the company logo on trucks, airplanes, coffee cups, baseball caps and even envelopes and packages that wash ashore. The main character espouses the virtues of Federal Express and, ever the loyal employee, Dolan cuts down the competition.

"I'll be right back" he says to his girlfriend of many years Kelly (Helen Hunt). She watches him board the Federal Express plane off to solve other problems in

distant countries.

Dolan's Federal Express plane becomes enveloped in a tropical storm a la *The Perfect Storm*. The pilots fight furiously to save the plane, but the control panel becomes useless. Nolan sees the special keepsake, a gift from Kelly.

The film transcends the product placement and busyness of the Federal Express company and becomes an adventurous struggle.

While trying to retrieve it, Nolan is sucked out as the plane's tail section is torn off. Here some amazing visuals help us to be Nolan struggling through water, confusion and finally darkness.

Man vs. nature, himself

Here is where the film transcends the product placement and busyness of the Federal Express company and becomes an adventurous struggle, setting man against nature and, as with all good stories, a struggle between man and himself.

The next day, Dolan comes to the island that he will be forced to live on. He stumbles about at first,

trying to understand what has happened to him. Some audience members uncomfortably laughed as Dolan yells for help. He digs a help sign in the sand, only to have nature's waves erase it. He attempts to row off the island, only to be beaten by those same waves. Here we become part of an epic island struggle of one man working to survive.

Showing us what he thinks

These island scenes show Hanks' strengths as an actor. The best actors are the ones who show us what their characters are thinking. The sense of panic, the determination to survive, the futile acceptance. Especially well done and initially chilling is the dullness of eyes Hanks shows in the later scenes. The toll of island life is felt by all. The island life is the most important part of the film where we see the character struggle through the life he has and the life he had. Like Zemeckis and Hanks' Forest Gump feather blowing in the wind, Nolan discovers that he can only live life according to what the tide brings him. That nature and fate chooses what happens to him and that he has to do the best with what he's got. According to the film makers, those are the choices all of us get to make. Here Christians can be thankful for a worldview of sovereign God.

The unopened package

In the midst of the island isolation, here we see also the pervasiveness of our mass media — commercial society. What better way to advertise than to have an audience sit through a two hour movie bombarded by Federal Express logos and visuals of the dedicated employee who saves a package to be delivered if he gets off a deserted island. An unopened package on a deserted island? What if it had a radio or rations or a collections of yo-yo's (to pass the time). The product this time is not just in the background. It's front and centre and a major plot device. The time-conscious Fedex employee now has all the time in the world as he is cast away from society.

With no pirates, man Friday or attacking cannibals, the isolation of a lost man with a Federal Express package may have been too much to bear for movie and company executives and a quick 20-minute finale ties up all loose ends, including any Federal Express plot points.

Tom Hanks' performance will be noted by the Academy come Oscar time, but I'm sure Federal Express will award him with a best actor in a commercial.

News/Opinion

Pope John Paul II suffering from Parkinsons

(Religion Today) — Pope John Paul II is suffering greatly from Parkinson's disease, his doctor says. Italian orthopedic surgeon Gianfranco Fineschi became the first member of the pope's medical team to acknowledge publicly that John Paul, 80, has the disease, according to news reports.

Fineschi told a weekly magazine that he was concerned about the pope's grueling schedule.

Surgeon fears for Pope's health

"Every time the pope sets off on a journey or when he gets tired during an official engagement, I fear for him," Italian news agency ANSA quoted Fineschi as saying, according to Reuters news service. "I should order him to rest but it

would be futile. The various operations he has had and the Parkinson's disease have made him suffer much."

The Vatican has never officially acknowledged that the pope has Parkinson's and no member of his medical team previously openly linked the pope with the disease. Symptoms include a violent trembling in his left hand, rigidity of the facial muscles, and a slow, stooped gait. Parkinson's advances slowly through the body, and its symptoms can be partially suppressed by drugs. The pope's increasing frailty has led to suggestions that he might become the first leader of the Roman Catholic Church in 700 years to retire, but the Vatican has denied that possibility.

Dobson praises Catholic church for efforts to protect family

Eric Gorski

ROME (BP)—It was a striking image to one observer: evangelical Protestant powerhouses James Dobson and Chuck Colson visiting the headquarters of the Catholic church, the very institution Protestants rebelled against centuries ago.

Dobson and Colson joined a global cast of business executives and Catholic politicians, lawyers and scholars last week for a three-day conference at the Vatican on the world economy's impact on families. They also met briefly with the pope.

A special moment

For centuries, Catholics and Protestants have clashed about the role and infallibility of the pope, among other issues. That makes the brief meeting between Pope John Paul II, Dobson, president of Colorado Springs-based Focus on the Family, and prison ministry leader Colson a special moment.

The significance was not lost on Colson who, according to one conference participant, noted that there would have been a time when he would not have been invited and he would not have come.

Though Catholics and Protestants disagree frequently on theological matters, dialogue between the faith groups has been going on for years. On several social issues such as opposition to abortion and homosexuality many evangelicals

and Catholics find common ground.

What distinguished this meeting was that the subject went beyond usual ecumenical dialogue to a topic of mutual concern — the "breakdown of the family and the deterioration of the respect for human life," said Russell Hittinger, a law professor at the University of Tulsa and a Catholic who was one of the conference's 20-plus speakers.

Conference participant, the Rev. Robert Sirico, a Catholic priest and president of the Acton Institute, said Vatican officials told him they could not recall a similar meeting involving such high-level evangelical Protestants taking place at the Vatican.

Bond of fraternal love

"This kind of communication, this kind of dialogue, it's not an attempt to negotiate the truth, but to approach it together in a bond of fraternal love," Sirico said. "Part of the thing is to get over the hump of knowing each other. I think that's what's beginning to happen here."

The Vatican is expected to release a six-page statement this month summing up the Nov. 27-29 conference, which was co-sponsored by the Vatican's Pontifical Council for the Family and the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, a Grand Rapids, Mich. think-tank that

Forward in faith and blessed by God's grace

Building Trust

Vicky Van Andel



I consider myself a Christian feminist. I have not always been a feminist. I did not hear about the word until the nineteen sixties and it was not a good word back then. I became a Christian feminist over the years. It took a while to get there and even to admit to being one. For a long time I was afraid to call myself a Christian feminist.

When I say I am a Christian feminist this is what I mean. By Christian, I mean that I believe in God and in the Bible as God's true revelation. I believe that I have been redeemed through the sacrifice of Jesus. By feminist, I mean that I believe in mutuality and equality in gender relationships.

Technically there are different types of feminists. For example, some feminists defend equal rights in the work place and others focus on the right of women to have control over their own bodies.

For me, it means to be a child of God and to be fully human, complete and whole before God. I am a sinful person but I am forgiven. In my relationships with others I try to reflect that wholeness, knowing and trusting that I am created in God's image.

Bible passages sustained me

There are certain specific Bible passages that have sustained me during my life. They have jumped out at me at unpredictable times, usually without any conscious effort on my part. Several of these are: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1). "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Romans 15:13 (RSV)). These are Bible passages that have validated me as a person and have given me hope, courage, comfort and assurance.

Interestingly these Bible passages are not gender specific, and they are not central to the discussion on women in office. The texts that are central to that discussion have been difficult for me to fully comprehend. I have read many books to try to understand what they might mean and what God's message in them might be for me. I have been blessed by this study, and I thank all the people who dedicate their lives to biblical and theological research. Learning more about women and the Bible, and searching for answers to many questions has helped me accept myself as a

Christian feminist.

If I am really truthful, the verses that are central to the role of women in the church and society have distracted me from my response to God. They have sidetracked me in my worship and held me back. They have even at times made me feel insecure and afraid.

However, I do understand the dilemma that we as Christians and as a church are struggling with. The roles of men and women in the church and in society have functioned in a certain pattern for millennia. This pattern is now being challenged and that is having a fundamental impact on our lives and our relationships with each other as women and men.

We now strive for equality and mutuality. Instead of women and men having prescribed roles, their roles are now equal. Women and men talk together about how they want to live out their Christian calling and they then work it out according to their gifts. We listen to each other and are mutually enriched by it.

Domination and subordination

Prescribed roles tend to contain elements of domination and subordination. There are specific things that certain people have to do and that others cannot do. This can lead to power and powerlessness. Taken to the extreme it can lead to violence. This violence tends to be against women. We know that from our local news reports and from research.

That is why I know it is okay for me to be a Christian feminist. God calls all of us according to our gifts and to his purpose, and God blesses us.

May the church soon come to terms with the role of women. It is very important, especially for the next generation, our children. Church has to fit with life in the new millennium. If it doesn't, our children will experience church as irrelevant. We owe our children a strong and united church community, one that inspires them to pass it on to our grandchildren!

Vicky Van Andel is Director of Emmanuel Home for seniors in Edmonton. She has a degree in nursing. Vicky has agreed to serve as the editor of this column dedicated — broadly — to women's issues and perspectives.

Anyone who is interested in contributing to this column is invited to contact Vicky Van Andel at email: vanandel@oanet.com or via fax at: 1-780-473-0970

blends conservative religious and free-market business views.

Much in common

Dobson was among a smaller group of speakers who met briefly with the pope after his weekly general audience. Paul Hetrick, a Focus on the Family spokesman, said he didn't think the two had time to talk during the meeting.

According to Catholic News Service, Dobson praised the

Catholic church for its efforts to protect the family.

Dobson was quoted as saying that although he has theological differences with the Catholic church: "when it comes to the family, there is far more agreement than disagreement, and with regard to moral issues from abortion to premarital sex, safe-sex ideology and homosexuality, I find more in common with Catholics than with some of my evangelical

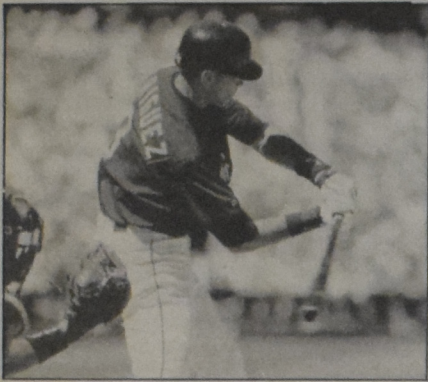
brothers and sisters."

Hittinger, the law professor, said conference participants agreed that Christians should continue pressing their issues in the political realm, but more importantly need to evangelize people and "convert their minds and heart."

(This story first appeared in the *Colorado Springs Gazette* and is used here by permission.)

Sports/News

A whole lot of nothing



Alex Rodriguez

People pay good money for all kinds of weird stuff. Anybody with a nouveau riche computer geek friend knows this as gospel truth. As a society, we used to put high value on something if there was only one of it, like maybe a certain Renoir or an old chair. But things are changing. Now the Texas Rangers are paying \$252 million over 10 years to buy Alex Rodriguez, a shortstop. We've got lots of those.

Here's where we expect the outrage. "What's going on?" the citizens cry. The answer is, "Nothing." We're going nowhere and ending up with nothing.

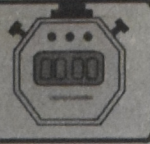
\$252 million is stupid rich. It's gigglingly shocking. Go ahead. Get out a calculator. Try to figure out what Alex will make per day. I can't. My calculator keeps going mental when I try (Yes, Melvin, I know about scientific notation but just go with me here).

Distorted values

The big shift that's happening here is in meaning. What used to be a well-paying job is no longer so well paying, and most of the ballplayers now seem less important. Tom Hicks, the Rangers owner, will pay more for Rodriguez than he paid to buy the team, the stadium, and the property it sits on. Rodriguez will make more in three days than Bill Clinton makes in a year. He'll get \$173,793.10 a game and about \$43,000 for every at-bat.

The person to feel sorry for, of course, is Rodriguez. Not in some Calvinist, God-wants-me-poor, work ethic vein either. His mind is simply going to

After the
Buzzer
Tim Antonides



blow. This kind of money will kill the guy. It'll be a big stinking mess. He'll have to hire people to watch over it, and then hire other people to make sure the first people are honest, and then he'll lay awake at night wondering if they're honest too. Every game, he'll have to have good (no, great) numbers or the fans will hate him. If he trots instead of runs off the field, they'll be all over him. He can't be sick or injured. Otherwise he'll be an overpaid slacker.

The price of something used to depend on its uniqueness and desirability. If it was hard to get and people wanted it, you could charge a whole mess of "Benjamins" for it. Not now. Pretty much everything is expensive. Which brings me back to what I said before. This Rodriguez business has gotten us nowhere and brought us nothing. Just a brick wall where everything loses its value.

The league is fed up

I'm glad this happened, though. The league is fed up. Bud Selig, the commissioner of Major League Baseball said that he's going to do something about it. He and others in the governing bodies of professional sports are starting to realize that there are limits to how much greed and avarice you can maintain without stripping away the soul of the game. Things will change now. Salary caps are coming. Sorry to tell all you Bay Street guys. I know you hate this sort of thing.

Maybe I should talk about stewardship here. Shake my finger at an industry that prostitutes itself to the highest bidder. Offer stewardly alternatives for the big guys to consider. The problem is that our professional sports leagues are based on the foundations of capitalism and Darwinian economics. I hope that some day the leagues get shaken up by an influx of strong, proactive leaders who believe in teams and players and sports. Indignation is fine for a while but please, somebody, do something. My sensibilities (and my calculator) can't take it.



Tim Antonides taught Grade 8 and is a basketball coach at Surrey Christian School in Surrey, B.C.

Christian gangster movie

TOKYO (Religion Today) — A movie about a feared Japanese gangster who became a Christian preacher has premiered in Tokyo. *Jesus is My Boss* depicts the life of Hiroyuki Suzuki and is being shown in the Shinjuku district, where gangs run protection rackets, prostitution, and gambling, according to Reuters news service.

Reformed gangsters start church

Suzuki, 45, converted 10 years ago when his gambling, drugs, and sickness brought him close to

suicide, Reuters reported. He sought help in a church in Shinjuku, where the pastor "told me that anyone can be reborn. No matter how ugly you are, God respects and loves you," Suzuki said the pastor told him. He founded Mission Barabbas, a group of eight reformed gangsters, or yakuza, whose church is named after the condemned criminal freed by Pontius Pilate instead of Jesus.

When a film producer approached him, Suzuki was reluctant to approve the film, he said. "No one wants to show what they

are ashamed of," he said, referring to his two prison terms and the mutilation of the tips of two fingers in punishment for insubordination to the gangster boss. But he said making the movie fulfilled his duty to his new boss, Jesus Christ.

The film is due for simultaneous release in May in Japan and Korea. Its makers have collected \$3.54 million in donations from about 2,000 Christian groups but say they need twice that much to break even.

Who is this Jesus?: NBC special counters ABC's Search for Jesus

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — When ABC's Peter Jennings hosted a television documentary on the life of Jesus, the network heard from conservative Christians who complained that the view of Christ was not accurate.

D. James Kennedy, pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church and president of Evangelism Explosion International, was one of those conservatives.

On Dec. 26, Kennedy presented a response to Jennings' *A Search for Jesus*, with a one-hour primetime special on NBC: *Who is this Jesus?* It sought to present a balanced view of Jesus, not the typical media portrayal, according to Clint Pruett, U.S. Regional Coordinator of Evangelism Explosion International.

liberal 'experts' cast doubts on the deity of Christ," Pruett said. "No conservatives were interviewed; the information was one-sided."

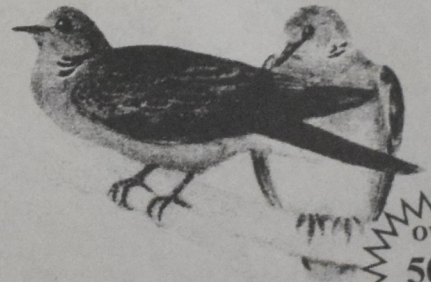
The one-hour documentary explored major topics surrounding Jesus' life, including the reliability of the biblical accounts, archaeological evidence of Jesus' miracles, messianic prophecies, ancient texts that corroborate Bible events, and Jesus' death and resurrection.

It featured interviews with historians, theologians, and scholars from a variety of faiths and institutions, including Harvard and Princeton universities, the Jesus Seminar, the John Paul II Institute, and Westminster Abbey.

ABC program 'one-sided'

Pruett noted that the show is a result of what he called a one-sided presentation by ABC.

"Instead of accurately portraying a Biblical view of our Lord,



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News Comment

Nose for News



Bert Hielema

WHEN I WRITE THIS, IT IS still early in the New Year 2001 and my memories of the year 2000 are still fresh. For me January 1 last year was an anti-climax. Here I was: a brand new generator, food stocked up, extra candles, lots of firewood, but when the clock turned from 99 to 00 not even a hint of hesitation. Large corporations spent billions to fix their computers, but to those who did nothing, nothing happened, disproving all dire predictions.

The year 2000 not only began but also ended on an underhanded note: the American election was fixed by the Bush Brothers and affirmed in a scandalous decision by the highest court in the U.S. I am sure I overreact when I say that much of what happened in between was pure hocus-pocus as well, and I think of the conference on Climate Change in the Hague which changed nothing, or the Federal election which also left things the same, even more so, or the hi-tech stock market with the so-called dot.com stocks which milked investors of billions of dollars. They should have been called Cheat.dot.com, all legit of course, but a sham just the same.

MAYBE MY VIEW IS colored by my personal experience. In the past year I had my

credit card compromised twice: first crooks bought stuff on my VISA in Malaysia on the same date that I was somewhere in the U.S.A., and just before year's end, another cyber thief used my number to try to pay his monthly Internet bill. Perhaps the entire year was a fraud: labelled as the start of a new millennium, in reality it concluded one. Now that we have definitely entered the Third Millennium since the birth of Christ, and, as this only happens once in a thousand years, a brief look at what, I think, was the most significant event in that period is not out of place.

IN THE YEAR 1001, Europe did not know about the Chinese, who had no inkling of the Incas, who, in turn were not aware of the Arabs. In short: the world was divided into geographically separated segments. The Europeans changed this. Starting in the 15th century, Portuguese and Spanish ships began to probe farther and farther away from their shores. Their goal was plunder and booty, and this evil intent — you might even call it sin — was the prime motive of the early explorers (with the blessing of the church). By forcing themselves on Asians, Africans, and Amerindians, they started a trend which resulted in

the creation of global empires.

This act of colonization, of imposing the will and habits of one people onto another, made the rest of the world part of a single system and changed humanity's sense of self forever. Now it is threatening to give us a uniform world with one bland culture, dominated by the self-same spiritual stamp of materialism.

HOW CAME EUROPEANS

were the perpetrators here? The Chinese and the Arabs had flourishing, wealthy civilizations 500 years ago, while Europe was awash in poverty, disease and war. The wealth the Spanish coveted was to be found in the Indian Ocean basin. That's why they developed long-range vessels and navigational systems, all for the single goal of plunder and the accumulation of wealth. (Columbus was headed there in 1492 when he discovered America and called the natives, what else, Indians.)

So the Spanish adventurers, financed by the crown and encouraged by the cross, murdered their way through advanced civilizations around the world and created the first global enterprise. They first tried to dominate Europe, but they were always stopped at the English Channel, unable to conquer the British Isles: the Spanish Armada in 1588, Napoleon at Trafalgar in the early 1800s.

And now we have as sole master of the World, the U.S.A. At the start of the third millennium, it is at the hub of the universe, with a president who has acquired power under a cloud of fraud. Now Mighty America, at the shores of both the Atlantic and the Pacific, occupies the very centre of the earth. When this country sneezes, the whole world catches a cold. When this country gets a cold, the whole world gets the flu. When this country gets the flu.....

IT MIGHT NOT GET the flu, but it and the whole world are in for a fever. Fever is a sign of infection, resulting in a rise in body temperature. The breakdown of the meeting on Climate Change in the Hague and the legacy of the controversial presidential election in the U.S.A. is a sure sign that the world is unable to deal with global warming and the new cabinet appointments by Bush will make matters only worse.

His new Secretary of Energy is Spencer Abraham, who, as former senator from the Motor State Michigan, blocked efforts for higher fuel-economy cars, tried to suspend the federal gasoline tax

and wanted to open the protected Alaskan coastline of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas exploration — all for the sole benefit of Auto City Detroit. His entire voting record has been singularly hostile to the environment. Now, as a new member of the new oil club in Washington, he can call the shots. The new chief of the Environmental Protection Agency, Governor Christie Whitman of New Jersey, muddled the science of climate change with the chemistry of the ozone hole in an interview, showing that she doesn't know anything about the affliction affecting our planet.

LET ME POINT OUT THAT

in itself 'the Hague' was not so important. Had there been an agreement, it would not have halted climate change. Estimates are that the amount of greenhouse gases, our sins of emission, would double even if every country in the world cuts to below year 1990 levels, as agreed in Kyoto. And there is not the remotest chance of this happening. China and India are excluded, and they account for more greenhouse gases than all of Europe.

Bush, in spite of his initials of G.W. as in Global Warming, does not believe in it. His appointed team, mostly old, conservative oil and military men, have set their own agenda and are now the new masters of the world, with Dick Cheney as captain, while G.W. Bush, as nominal head, will occasionally make some mangled announcements.

The true meaning of the ascent of the quartet Cheney, Powell, Rice and Rumsfeld is the return of the military-industrial complex to the heart of the American Government. These people, elected by the white rich, defend executions and guns and want to beef up the military and revive the cold-war dream of a missile shield. They will stick to the tame, the unadventurous, the traditional, the stuff of the seventies, as if an energy crisis never happened, as if Global Warming is a fiction of the Liberal Elite.

BUT 2001 IS A DIFFERENT

world, a world so interdependent, that everybody breathes the pollution generated in China and everybody eats the food grown wherever, and everybody gets the same diseases. The trouble is that we can't solve the problems of the world without the U.S.A. and the U.S.A. can't solve its problems without the rest of the world.

For better or worse, we are one world. The whole structure of

global governance becomes more important every year, but the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank all depend on the U.S.A. to reform them. Signs are that the new-old people don't want to get involved, which means that we are in for an anarchic free-for-all world where globalization and atmospheric pollution will go unchecked, where the multinational conglomerates will go their own destructive way, stealing what belongs to all for the benefit of the few.

YET, I THINK THERE IS

a golden lining to all this: God is speeding up his coming. Bush is an instrument in God's hand to accelerate the 'abomination that desolates' of which Daniel speaks in the last chapter of his book. And just as the Assyrians in the Old Testament were used by God to punish his chosen people — for which God later called them on the carpet — so, too, this anti-creational cabinet in the Capitol will get their reward.

Writes John Gray, professor of European Thought at the prestigious London School of Economics, in the *Guardian Weekly*: "The dangers of wild globalization are legion. If world markets become more turbulent, pressures for protectionism may be irresistible, particularly in the U.S. Wars may be fought over shrinking resources such as oil and water."

OIL AND WATER. BLACK

and White Gold. Finite products, especially in a more volatile climate. The World Meteorological Organization, headquartered in Geneva, reports that the year 2000 has continued the run of warm years in spite of the persistent cooling influence of the tropical Pacific La Nina, of which we in North America have tasted the consequences this past winter.

Based on observations from a world-wide network of ships, buoys and land-based weather stations, it has concluded that the past year was similar to 1999 which was the 5th warmest year in the past century and a half. The largest Insurance Company in the world, Munich Reinsurance, announced that the past year was the highest for natural disasters, an amount that has increased steadily over the past few decades.

Bert Hielema arrived in Canada 50 years ago this year. He lived 25 of them in the Niagara Peninsula and 25 in Tweed, which calls for a celebration. We simply don't do enough of that!

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Analysis

The Christian-Muslim standoff in Nigeria

Jan H. Boer

Part 1: The Christian viewpoint

The last few years the media, especially the Christian media, have published story after story about frictions between Christians and Muslims. These are usually reports about Muslim attacks on Christians. Seldom is it the other way around. *Christian Courier* is not left behind in this trend. It has published many stories especially about Nigeria, Sudan and Indonesia for good reasons. The Sudan is a country of international concern, because it seems to stand out as a Muslim country persecuting its Christian citizens. Indonesia shares the Dutch connection with many readers of *Christian Courier*. Nigeria is of great interest to Christian Reformed readers because of their church's heavy long-time mission commitment to that country. I myself have served 30 years there as a Christian Reformed missionary.

Two huge blocks of Christians and Muslims

Though this and later articles will emphasize the Nigerian situation, Nigeria is not an isolated case. It can be thought of as a showcase of Christian-Muslim relations in a context where the two religions have an equal number of adherents. It is the only country where there are two huge blocks of Christians and Muslims almost equal in size, some 50 million each. In many other countries that contain both religions, it is a majority-minority situation. In some both are minority religions. It is my hope that this and occasional succeeding articles will help readers to better understand the volatile relations that exist between Christians and Muslims and to pray more intelligently for adherents of both religions as well as for Christian missionaries.

Background

Relations between Muslims and others in Nigeria go back many centuries. Originally, all of what is now Nigeria was inhabited by adherents of African Traditional Religions (ATR). (Though each ethnic group has its own variety of ATR and there exist wide differences, nevertheless, underneath all ATRs lies a common worldview that easily obscures the significant differences to a casual observer.) Muslim traders and preachers began to penetrate what is now northern Nigeria with the eventual result that Islam became the dominant religious and cultural



ARTWORK COURTESY JAN BOER

An African interpretation of The Last Supper by the Mafa people of Cameroun.

force in the far north. Three major ethnic groups especially submitted to this religion: Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri to such an extent that Islam is now considered their traditional religion. Islam has become so deeply entrenched among these ethnic groups that Muslims have forgotten that their ancestors at one time were Traditionalists. They cannot imagine why any of their ethnic compatriots would choose to be anything but Muslim.

Further south, there is Nigeria's Middle Belt, the focus of Christian Reformed mission work. It is the traditional home to a large number of ethnic groups, each with its own language, culture and variety of ATR. These people over time became the fodder of slave raiding and trading on the part of their northern Muslim neighbors. Muslim rulers, known as "emirs," would regularly send their troops into those areas and devastate them in their quest for "pagan" slaves. In fact, the Sokoto Caliphate in present north-west Nigeria was the largest slave society in the world at the beginning of the 1900s.

The devastation caused by these Muslim raiders was almost total. One eye witness of this Muslim terrorism was Karl Kumm, the founder of the Sudan United Mission, a missionary umbrella organization with which the Christian Reformed mission is closely identified even today. The following is a mixed quotation combining my own comments with those of Kumm that graphically expresses the nightmare:

He wrote of emirs sending slave raiders into their territories in order to collect the annual tribute due to him and in the process destroying, killing, enslaving, utterly devastating large areas. "I have known close on five thousand square miles of territory

absolutely depopulated by the ruling empire." He personally had seen "huge walled towns deserted, thousands of acres of farm land relapsing into jungle and an entire population absorbed. And this sort of thing is not done once or twice in a century, but it is... being done somewhere or other every day.

(Boer, 1979, p. 127; 1984, pp. 36-38.)

Western interest in Africa

During the 19th century, Western nations turned their interest towards Africa. Missionaries and traders from various countries entered the area, sometimes cooperating, at other times opposing each other. Eventually, the British gained control over the area and in 1914 created what is now the nation of Nigeria. Though missionaries had already gained access to the south during the 19th century, it was during the colonial period of 1900-1960 that they obtained a strong foothold in the Middle Belt so that by independence in 1960, there was a significant Christian church in that area. The process of Christianization accelerated significantly after independence, a sure proof that Nigerian Christianity can hardly be dismissed as a mere colonial affair.

The British put a stop to raiding and slavery and established a sort of uneasy Pax Britannica. However, throughout their rule they consciously favored Muslims over against Traditionalists and Christians. They had much respect for Muslim culture. It was literate, well organized politically, sophisticated. They appointed Muslims to civil service positions over ATRs and Christians. They placed Muslim emirs over traditional chiefs and ethnic groups that previously had been small but independent nations. What the

Muslims could not achieve in the Middle Belt by means of their own warfare and raids, the British helped them accomplish "peacefully." By the time the British handed over the reins to Nigerians in 1960, Muslims were in solid control of the major power positions in the country and many non-Muslim people were now firmly under Muslim control. These included both Christians and adherents of ATR. Both never have forgotten how Muslim authorities of other ethnic groups were imposed on them. It is an internal form of colonialism that has been a major cause of unrest, upheavals, violence and bloodshed during the 1980s and 90s.

Sultan bought Muslim loyalty

During the initial post-colonial period, Muslim rulers felt free, as Muslims generally do, to utilize all the government machinery, power and finance in their Muslim mission. The most powerful of them, the Sultan or Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, is famous for

became head of the military government. At first glance, it looked like Christians had beaten Islam and were now in power. However, after the civil war against Biafra, the Christian Gowon presided over the confiscation of Christian hospitals and schools. The Christian reaction, in keeping with their traditional stance in the country till now, was one of quiet resignation and much grumbling. The question arose in the Christian mind as to who really ruled. Was Gowon merely a Christian pawn in Muslim hands? The event snapped something in the Christian psyche that would never be reversed. Next time they were faced with a Muslim challenge, they would not take it lying down again.

That next challenge was the Muslim demand to have the sharia, the Muslim law, enshrined in the national constitution. During the 1970s a constitutional assembly was held that was to produce a new constitution for the country. The pivotal issue turned out to be whether or not the sharia could have a place in it. The antithesis



Painting of a shepherd, by the Mafa people of Cameroun.

pulling out all the government stops in his bid to "dip the Qur'an into the Atlantic" — a pithy statement expressing the alleged Muslim goal of Islamizing all of Nigeria, from the northern desert to the Atlantic coast. By means of government largesse, he bought over chiefs and entire ethnic groups, politicians and businessmen. It was a veritable crusade or, as Muslims call it, jihad. The crusade led to the conversion of many thousands of adherents of ATR and even of many Christians. It became a major contributing factor to Christian resentment and mistrust of the Muslim community.

1966 was the year of the first two of many coups in Nigeria. Ahmadu Bello, the nation's leading Muslim, was killed. General Yakubu Gowon, a Christian,

between the two religions as it has developed in Nigeria became starkly obvious to all and brought the country close to another civil war.

The Christian response to this demand was an absolute negative with no compromise ever offered. While the Christian community earlier in the same decade had grumblingly and passively accepted the confiscation of its institutions, this time around its response was aggressive. By now they were convinced that Muslims did indeed plan to turn Nigeria into a Muslim country and they were determined not to let it happen, come what may. The battle line was drawn. It has remained so ever since, even into the new century.

Continued on page 18...

Analysis

The Christian-Muslim standoff in Nigeria

... continued from page 17

The Christian Perspective

The perspective of Nigerian Christianity is based on three pillars. The first is their memory that has its roots in pre-colonial times. Like those of Nigerian Muslims, the ancestors of Nigerian Christians were adherents to ATR, long after Islam had already made deep inroads, especially in what is now northern Nigeria.

The Christian successors to these Traditionalist victims have not forgotten this history of oppression and slavery and see a line of continuation through colonialism into contemporary Nigeria. They have seen how during colonialism Muslims knew how to manipulate the British and largely controlled access to power and wealth. They remember how the Sardauna utilized all the power and wealth of government in his bid to islamize the Middle Belt. They continue their bitter battle against enshrining the sharia in the constitution into the new century. They continue to experience what they see as oppressive behavior of Muslim emirs and state governments. In fact, they are convinced that the entire government machinery in Nigeria at all levels is skewed against Christians and controlled by Muslims.

Towards the end of 1999, the elected governor of Zamfara state in the far north, Ahmed Sani, declared that his government was about to declare his state an Islamic state with the sharia as its constitution. He immediately sought to allay opposition by further announcing that only Muslims would be affected, while others would continue to be ruled by the legal system put in place by the British colonialists. Since then, a number of other states have made similar announcements.

Sharia courts discriminate against Christians

However, in some states the sharia had already been part of the legal system with the same exclusionary provision for non-Muslims. Many are the horror stories where that provision was ignored and people tried by sharia courts in ways that were often oppressive and highly discriminatory against non-Muslims. On the very day of the governor's announcement, reports were published about the Kano State Government's threat to many churches to either relocate or be destroyed. On that same day, the Emir of Ilorin's called for the removal of all churches from his city. Even as I write this article in December,



A Mafa illustration of the Prodigal Son parable.

2000, popular rumor has it that the governors' own son was recently caught stealing, but his hand was not cut off, at least, not yet. Non-Muslim women report that they have difficulty accessing public transport since Islam forbids such free mixing of genders. Anti-alcohol legislation can hardly fail to affect non-Muslims. Karl Maier, a journalist with ties to the British Broadcasting Corporation, interviewed the governor on this issue and reports that the latter clearly had plans that were contradictory on the score and that he did not see his way clear to adhere to the exclusionary provision in any consistent way.

These and a myriad of similar trends and events over the years make the Zamfara promise sound rather hollow. Christians strongly oppose this trend. It has led to general restlessness with many non-Muslim migrants from other states having packed their bags and returning to their home states. In Kaduna city the tension erupted into a full-scale violent riot that reportedly resulted in some 2,000 deaths.

The second pillar of the Christian perspective is the Muslim doctrine of the place of dhimmi. Dhimmi are non-Muslims in a Muslim society. This is a matter of established Muslim orthodoxy of public record accessible to all. Dhimmi are at best second-class citizens whose religion is merely tolerated and only in a truncated form dictated by Islam. While Islam has a better record of tolerance for other religions in the past than do Christians, that record has long been surpassed by much of the contemporary world, especially by world Christianity. What was comparatively broadminded in earlier centuries, is today regarded as unacceptable intolerance. Islam has never withdrawn its position on the status of dhimmi. The difficult situation of Christians living among Muslim majorities is well known. All this, too, makes the

Zamfara promise sound rather empty. In view of all this history and the classic stand on dhimmi, Nigerian Christians have every reason to fear the present trend and to oppose it.

Muslims focus on politics

The third pillar of the Christian perspective is the dualism they have inherited from missionaries versus the unity of religion and politics in Islam. The basic tendency in Islam is to identify politics and government as a major arena for the practice of Muslim piety. While Christians — in my opinion, incorrectly — tend to pour most of their energies into churches, for Muslims politics and government are among the main foci. Muslims feel comfortable in that sector. They do not hesitate to use whatever government resources available to them for the benefit of Islam. Once again, the Sardauna's mission is the clearest example of this tradition.

This Muslim unity of religion and politics is one of the main reasons Christians are clamoring for a secular government and a secular constitution, for the separation of church and mosque from government. They do not want their tax and oil monies spent on mosques all over the place or on Muslim courts or pilgrimages to Mecca. They are of the opinion that Muslims will commandeer the major share of these funds and that the latter will not equally honor the rights of others to those funds. They have seen too much evidence of the Muslim intention to turn Nigeria into a Muslim country. They regard the Federal Government as having been hijacked by Muslims. They claim government favors Muslim causes at the expense of Christians at various fronts. In fact, they have a strong sense of persecution by both Islam and its tool, the Federal Government as well as many state governments.

It is clear that this Christian perspective is not one that encour-

ages wholehearted co-operation with Muslims in building up a nation to which the two religions would contribute as equal partners, each from its own standpoint.

Christians want equality

Christians want a situation of equality, but they see anything but that in the Muslim stance. In fact, they are sure that Muslims intend to turn Nigeria into a Muslim country, including the dhimmi provision for non-Muslims. They feel that only a secular government and a secular constitution that eliminates all traces of religion from the sphere of government will make for a viable Nigeria. Anything compromising secularism they reject—at least, sometimes. Their struggle for this secular setup has not prevented them from demanding government funds for all kinds of Christian causes, including schools, hospitals, pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Rome, thus sending very mixed signals to both government and the Muslim community.

This dualistic solution offered by Christians was not simply a stroke of genius on the part of Nigerians. Neither did it simply fall out of heaven. It is a major component of the Gospel package bequeathed to Nigeria by Western missionaries, including the Reformed amongst them.

The curse of this dualism is recognized increasingly by leading English Evangelicals, who have not only become aware of it, but who have also begun to reject it as a serious shortcoming in the missionary message. I intend to deal with that in some future article.

It is as unAfrican as it is unBiblical. Nigerian Christians latched on to this dualistic approach not as a conscious strategy so much as an instinctive decision based on their missionary heritage. It constitutes the basic foundation of the perspective they offer the nation — and is in direct conflict with a central aspect of the Muslim worldview, namely a wholistic view of religion that leaves no room for secularism. Both parties have drawn the line of battle at this front with Christians offering a secular approach that is countered by the Muslim insistence on a wholistic solution to the problem of the relationship of religion and government.

The basic motivation of this Nigerian Christian stance was a combination of fear for Muslims, mistrust, anger and even hatred. I believe that the fear has largely dissipated. Christians have overcome the earlier passivism, inherited from both their forefathers

and from pietistic missions, that prevented them from challenging government takeover of schools and hospitals during the 70s. From the late 70s on, it has not taken much for Christians to actively challenge any perceived Muslim attempt at hegemony.

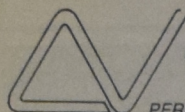
The same cannot be said about mistrust, anger and hatred. A grand dose of this combination, based on a reading of history and long-term patterns of Muslim behavior, still firmly undergirds the Christian perspective. I believe there are solid reasons for this mistrust and I share it. Anger also has its reasons in this context. When one reads Muslim publications like *The Pen*, a weekly, and its Hausa-language counterpart, *Alkalami*, he can only shudder with apprehension. Even though the government-sponsored newspaper *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* superficially seems much more objective when there is no crisis at hand, its true pro-Muslim colors consistently shine through clearly anytime another Christian-Muslim crisis erupts.

However, anger and hatred, though humanly understandable, can never serve any constructive Christian purpose. Combined with mistrust, we have here a fatal combination that tends to disable Christian leaders in the Christian Association of Nigeria, the main ecumenical mouthpiece of Christians, from serious Christian reflection or careful strategizing. Nothing Muslims do or say is understood in its own terms. And much of what Christians do or say cannot be understood on its own terms either. The situation is much like the former cold war between East and West, when both major parties looked at every issue in terms of their cold war relationships. I have observed some very wise Christian leaders, in succumbing to this anger and hatred, react in stunningly unreasonable fashion to some Muslim initiatives that seemed altogether reasonable and fair. The term "fair" simply has little place in the Christian vocabulary when it comes to Muslim issues.

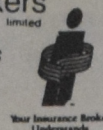
In a following article I plan to present the Muslim perspective with the full expectation that Reformed readers will find it intriguing because of its parallel with Reformed thinking.

Jan H. Boer is the former director of the Institute of Church and Society in Jos, Nigeria. At present he is a freelance researcher and author. For further background and information see his website at www.iserv.net/~boerjanh, which also provides a bibliography. The splendid paintings accompanying this article are available on Boer's website as postcards.

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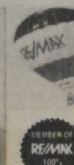
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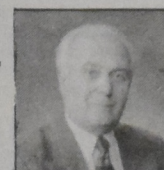
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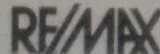
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From our children and grandchildren: Meeke & George Claus — Woodstock Allan, Jennifer & Wim de Vries Arie & Cindy Mast — Stouffville Erin & Lucas Leona & Don Gallagher — Ballantrae Lauren, Michelle, Jenna, Stephen Audrey & Eddie McMeekin — Bradford Heather, Craig Pete & Diane Mast — Sharon Ashley, Jessica, Lindsay, Sarah Alex & Joanne Mast — Goodwood Jesse, Jeremy An Open House will be held at their home on Thursday, February 1, 2001, from 1-4 p.m. Home address: Tollendale Village, Unit G4, 271 Tollendale Mill Rd., Barrie ON L4N 7S6 Phone 705-733-8193</p>	<p>Echterebrug, Fr. Kelowna, B.C.</p> <p>50th Wedding Anniversary "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." (Rom 12:12) With thankfulness to God, we joyfully announce the 50th wedding anniversary on January 4, 2001, of our parents and grandparents</p> <p>MICHAEL (MINNE) and SHIRLEY (JELTJE) KINGMA In August 2000, the whole family reunited and celebrated together in Kelowna, B.C. Kathy & Kenn Moore — Kamloops, B.C. Jennie Smith — Kelowna, B.C. (Jennie's husband Graham was taken home to his Lord in 1991) John & Bernice Kingma — Langley, B.C. Ed & Maria Kingma — New Westminster, B.C. Maryanne Kingma & Bill Bonner — Calgary, Alta. Ray & Benita Kingma — Burnaby, B.C. Mike & Karen Kingma — Chilliwack, B.C. and all the many grandchildren!! Home address: 128-1255 Raymer Ave., Kelowna, BC V1W 3S3</p> <p>OBE and ATSIE MOBACH (nee Oosterveen) February 1, 1956 With praise and thanksgiving to our Lord, we, their children and grandchildren would like to announce the 45th Wedding Anniversary of our parents. Please join us in celebrating this occasion. Open House to be held on Saturday January 27, 2001, D.V., from 2-4 p.m. and 7:30 - 10:00 p.m. at their home: 63 Hwy. #8, Dundas, ON L9H 4V1 Children: Bernie & Debbie Donnie Gerry & Pauline Lindsay, Matthew, Joshua David, Alexander, Heather Hanna Martin & Jodi Stephanie, Rebecca, Nicole Melissa, Renee</p> <p>50th WEDDING ANNIVERSARY KASE and ANNIE VAN DEN HEUVEL invite you to an Open House in celebration of their 50th wedding anniversary. The Open House will be from 2-4 p.m. at the Clinton & District Christian Reformed Church, Clinton, Ont., on Saturday, February 3, 2001. Join their family and friends on this special day. Best wishes only.</p> <p>With joy and thanksgiving to the Lord for His many blessings, we hope to celebrate on January 30, 2001, the 50th anniversary of our parents</p> <p>JAKOB and GEESINA VOOGD (nee DE VRIES) Together with them, we pray for God's continued blessings. Albert & Nancy Voogd — Brantford, Ont. George & Edna Voogd — Woodstock, Ont. Anne & Andy Vander Ploeg — Cambridge, Ont. Brian & Annette Voogd — Burford, Ont. Helen & Al Bloemendal — Brampton, Ont. Jenny & Gerald Bloemendal — Brampton, Ont. Jake Voogd — Oakville, Ont. Wayne & Nadine Voogd — Burford, Ont. Eugene & Cris — Burford, Ont. and 20 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. An Open House will be held on Saturday, January 27, from 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. at the Maranatha Christian Reformed Church, 577 Norwich St., Woodstock, Ont. Best wishes only, please. Home address: RR 2, Burford, ON NOE 1A0</p> <p>1951 February 1 2001 As a family we give glory to God that he has given 50 years of marriage to</p> <p>GERARD and MARGARET BOUMA (LOOS) We also praise God for the opportunity of 50 years in the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church. We pray that God will continue to bless them. Unto God Almighty, sitting on the throne, and the Lamb victorious, be the praise alone. We invite you to an anniversary Open House, the Lord willing, on Saturday, Feb. 3, 2001, from 2-4 p.m. at East Paris Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., and also to the 9:30 a.m. service on Sunday, Feb. 4, when Dad will preach the Word of God. Congratulations and tons of love from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren: Tom & Micky Jelsema — Middleville, Mich. Tim & Natalie, Derek, Jared, Casey Martin Bouma — Ann Arbor, Mich. Keith Bouma — Leadville, Colo. Amy & Nate, Katie Joanne Bouma — Calgary, Alta. Emily Home address: 2385 Portman Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508</p>	 <p><i>Congratulations to Gerben & Jacoba Nydam on their 50th wedding anniversary.</i></p> <p>1951 Feb 8 2001 Schermerhorn, N.H. Chatham, Ont. With much joy and thanksgiving to the Lord, we wish to announce the 50th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents:</p> <p>GERBEN and JACOBA NYDAM (nee LEEGWATER) Congratulations! We pray that God will continue to bless you with health and happiness! With love, from your family: Fred & Laura Nydam — London, Ont. Brad, Angela, Tim, Bev Joanne & Ralph Hamminga — Spragge, Ont. Valerie & Matthew Flewelling, Jeff, Cheryl, Rick & Erma, John Susan Kennedy — Petrolia, Ont. Laura, Jeremy, Brent, Rob John & Sue Nydam — Simcoe, Ont. Rick Clarence & Angie Nydam — Chatham, Ont. Justin, Brianna, Kelsey, Abigail Gary & Joanne Nydam — Chatham, Ont. Mieke, Kevin, (Derek), Joshua Anita & Calvin Dreise — Rockwood, Ont. Christine, Brandon, Daniel, Joel We invite family and friends to celebrate with us at an Open House on Feb. 10 from 2:30 - 4:30 p.m., D.V. at First Christian Reformed Church, Chatham, Ont. Best wishes only. Address: 92 Dunvegan Dr., Chatham, ON N7M 5A2</p>
<p>Birthday</p> <p>"Many, O God, are the wonders you have done... The things you planned for us... too many to declare." (Psalm 40:5) On January 15, 2001 D.V.,</p> <p>HENNIE (HARTZEMA) ENNEMA will be celebrating her 90th birthday. We praise and thank God for her good health and the many blessings He has given to her over the years. Congratulations from your husband, Tomas (who will be 90 in August!), your children: John & Marilyn, Corry & Bill, Kees & Shawnee, Hank & Mary, your 13 grandchildren and your seven great-grandchildren. Address: Hope Tower #304, 7900 McLaughlin Rd. S., Brampton, ON L6Y 5A7</p>		<p>Obituary</p> <p>De Krim Chatham the Neth. Ont. March 12, 1911 - Dec. 31, 2000 The Lord took home our dear husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather</p> <p>ENNO ENNEMA Beloved husband of Tena Ennema (Ronda) Children: Theresa & Ray VanderSluis — Chatham, Ont. Sarah & Dustyn Pumfrey (Joshua, Andrea, Kelli) Dan & Karen, Rachel & Brad Goodreau, Mary Ellen, Philip Peter & Laura Enneson — Toronto, Ont. Keira, Jean, Molly Tena & Ron Groenendal — Chicago, Ill. Becky & Jon Evans (Madelin), Jason, Alicia, Nathan We thank God for the faithful Christian example by which he blessed our lives and touched the lives of so many. Address: 40 Elm St., Apt. 201, Chatham, ON N7M 6A5</p>	

Classifieds

	Obituaries		Teachers	Obituary
<p>"See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands." (Isaiah 49:16a) The John Knox Christian School Board of Brampton, Ontario, expresses its sympathy to the family of its former teacher</p> <p>CHRISTHA MARIA BOLWIJN who passed away on December 13, 2000, in the Netherlands. We pray that they will be comforted by the hope of the resurrection.</p> <p>Funeral services were conducted in Zeist, the Netherlands, on Dec. 18, 2000, and a memorial service was held on Jan. 21, 2001, at Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Brampton, with Rev. John Tenyenhuus officiating.</p>	<p>1904 - 2000 DIRKJE CLAZINA HENNEVELD (nee KOK) went home peacefully to the Lord the morning of December 20, 2000. Survived and dearly loved by her son Henoch & Jenny, daughters Jeanette Hofman, Joanne Stadt, son-in-law Bill TeBokkel, 13 grandchildren, 34 great-grandchildren, sister Jackie Flinterman, sister-in-law, Janna Cook.</p> <p>Predeceased by her infant son Arie, husband Jacobus, son-in-law Norm Hofman, daughter Edith TeBokkel. At her funeral Pastor Bert Slofstra officiated.</p> <p>Thanks be to God for her life and wonderful witness.</p> <p>Psalm 84 Correspondence address: H. Henneveld, 110-3080 Townline Road, Abbotsford, BC V2T 5M2</p>	<p>AART SCHOUTEN On December 15, 2000, after a long and difficult struggle, Our Lord called His servant, Aart, home. Beloved husband of 57 years to Adriana, caring and loving father of: Diana Jeannette & Doug Anna & Aart Bert & Hendrica.</p> <p>Admired by eight grandsons and four great-grandchildren. Survived by sisters Adri, Pie and Mien and predeceased by brothers Piet, Jan and Adrian and sister Dien. Interment took place at the Union Cemetery in Barrie, after which a service of remembrance and praise was held at the Christian Reformed Church, Poplar Side Road West, Collingwood.</p> <p>The positive spirit, generosity and love of life he exemplified will be greatly missed by family and friends.</p>	<p>ORANGEVILLE, ONT.: Orangeville Christian School invites applications for an energetic, visionary Principal/Teacher preferably with 5 years teaching experience, to commence September 2001. Strengths in French and/or Spec. Ed. would be assets.</p> <p>Future plans include a facility relocation, and our goal is to have the highest calibre of Christian Education that demonstrates the love and glory of our Lord in all areas of life, and in all our relationships. Is the Lord calling you? Please forward a resume with your statement of faith and philosophy of Christian Education to:</p> <p>Orangeville Christian School PO Box 176 Orangeville ON L9W 2Z6 Phone: 519-941-3381 Fax: 519-941-4391 E-mail address: ocs@hurontario.net</p>	<p>SAM (SAKE) MIEDEMA (in his 59th year) At home with his family on January 2, 2001.</p> <p>After a seven year journey with Lou Gehrigs disease (ALS), released into the presence of his God and Savior. Loved husband of Marjorie den Haan. Treasured dad to: Wayne & Judy — Guelph Adrian & Suanne — Toronto Gary & Jennifer — Toronto Brian — Alliston Derek — Dresden.</p> <p>Dear Grampa to Miriam and Anna. Predeceased by parents Wybe & Anna Miedema and mother-in-law Maartje den Haan. Loved son-in-law to A.M. den Haan. Loved brother of Klaaske & Harry VanderKooij, Eva Miedema, Donald & Eva Miedema, and Dirk & Grace Miedema. Predeceased by brother Robert Miedema and nephews Warren and Mark. Beloved brother-in-law of Gerrit & Susan den Haan, Sam & Bonnie den Haan, Ed & Wilene den Haan, Martin & Berta den Haan and John & Bonnie den Haan. Uncle Sam to many nieces and nephews. Funeral service was held at Alliston Christian Reformed Church on Friday, January 5 at 1:00 p.m. If so desired, memorial donations to the ALS Society would be appreciated.</p> <p>"I know that my Redeemer lives." Correspondence address: Marjorie Miedema, 17 George St., Alliston, ON L9R 1M8</p>
<p>March 18, 1917 - Dec. 30, 2000 On Saturday, December 30, 2000</p> <p>GERBEN VEENEMAN was taken to be with Jesus in Paradise at the age of 83. Beloved husband for 55 years of Pim (nee Pietje Kikstra). Dear father and father-in-law of: Dirk & Maaike — Renton Gerrit & Elizabeth — Abbotsford, B.C. Anita — Calgary, Alta John and the late Janet — St. Catharines</p> <p>Ron & Sandra — Carleton Place Joanne & Paul Ouwinga — Grand Rapids, Mich.</p> <p>James — Grand Rapids, Mich. Loving grandpa of 19 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren.</p> <p>The funeral service was conducted by Rev. Lammet Slofstra. Friends are invited to sign the book of condolence at www.funderal-cast.com.</p> <p>Correspondence address: P. Veeneman, 72 Town Centre Dr., #308, Townsend, ON N0A 1S0</p>	<p>Zwartsluis, London, the Neth. Ontario 25 Dec. 1929 - 21 Dec. 2000</p> <p>POST - VAN DIJK After a lengthy illness the Lord in His wisdom called home our dearly beloved sister Willemiena, at the age of 70. She will be sadly missed by all of us.</p> <p>Beloved wife of Walter Post and mother of Marvin, Elisabeth and Herman.</p> <p>Brothers and sisters: Gijbert (deceased) & Niesje Huisman-van Dyk — Zwartsluis Jan H. & Alice (Van Dyk) Klingenberg — Thamesford, Ont. Lammet (deceased) & Ali Brijder-van Dyk — Zwartsluis Anneke (van Dyk) & Theo Nooitgedacht — Zwartsluis Cor & Hennie Post-van Dyk — Kampen</p> <p>Hilbert & Sya Veger-van Dyk — Kampen Elisabeth(van Dyk) & Rein Deelstra — Franeker Gerrit van Dyk (deceased) Funeral services took place on Saturday, December 23, 2000, at Bethel Christian Reformed Church, London, Ont. with Rev. Gerrit Haagsma officiating.</p> <p><i>The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.</i></p>	<p>Teachers LONDON, ONT.: London District Christian Secondary School requires a versatile teacher with science background. We need someone beginning February 23 to do a short term teaching assignment (Grade 9 science, Biology 3A, Biology OA) for several weeks while a staff member recuperates from surgery and then do a maternity leave beginning April 2. This would involve teaching Chemistry 3A, grade 10 Career Studies, and possibly a section of English 20 (grade 10 applied.) This position could lead to full-time employment for the 2001-2002 school year as well.</p> <p>There may be openings in other teaching areas for the 2001-2002 school year, especially in science and math. Interested applicants are asked to submit a letter of application, statement of faith, and resume. Contact:</p> <p>Henry Kooy, Principal London District Christian Secondary School 24 Braesyde Ave., London, ON N5W 1V3 e-mail: office@ldcss.on.ca Phone: 519-455-4360, Fax: 519-455-4364</p>	<p>ST. CATHARINES, ONT.: Calvin Memorial Christian School has a definite one year opening in the junior grades for the 2001-2002 school year. This is due to a parental leave but could develop into further employment. Strengths in the areas of music, French, PE and computer skills will be assets. Please direct your inquiries and application to:</p> <p>Karen Gerritsma, Principal Calvin Memorial Christian School 300 Scott St., St. Catharines ON L2N 1J3 Phone: 905-937-6302 Fax: 905-937-6303</p>	<p>Event Hans & Gina's Wedding Mountain Area Christian Singles Dramatization & Social Saturday, February 10, 2001, 8 p.m. St. Christophers Anglican Church, Guelph Line, Burlington, just south of the QEW. Tickets \$15. at the door. Info.: Sandra 905-388-7387; Sue 905-765-5543</p>
<p>Miscellaneous</p> <p>WANTED: Pocket edition of Psalter Hymnal (with music). Contact Mary Cuzen at 705-728-1630 (Barrie, Ont.) or e-mail: kacuzen@drlogick.com</p>			<p>Job Opportunity</p> <p>Construction Project Superintendent, Carpenters, Laborers, for Institutional/Commercial projects in the London, Woodstock and St. Thomas area. Also require a person capable of doing estimating and related work, in office located in the Belmont area. Fax resume to 519-269-3574 or mail to:</p> <p>Graceview Enterprises Inc., RR 1, Belmont ON N0L 1B0</p>	<p>House Exchange</p> <p>Want to exchange homes for approx. 3 weeks in Ontario, between Georgetown and Beamsville, during August or September. Contact: A. VanHelden, Leemveld 36, 9407 GB Assen, the Neth. Tel.: 011-31-592406165</p>
<p>Church News</p> <p>Christian Reformed Church</p> <p>Calls received: Rev. Shawn R. Brix from Bethel CRC, Acton, Ont. received a call to First CRC, Sarnia, Ont.</p>				

Send your anniversary, birthday and other important family notices to:
Christian Courier at fax #: 905-682-8313 or by e-mail to: ccadpromo@aol.com

Helpen levens redden

Kapitein Bruno Castonguay coördineert reddingsoperaties uit de lucht voor het Canadese leger (Canadian Forces / Forces canadiennes). Hij en zijn collega's en partners komen Canadezen die zich in gevaar bevinden te hulp. Zij komen dag en nacht in actie bij noodgevallen te land of op zee en helpen levens te redden. Dit is slechts één van de honderden diensten die de Canadese overheid beschikbaar heeft.

Voor verdere informatie over overheids diensten, in het Engels of in het Frans:

- Bezoek het dichtstbijzijnde Toegangs Centrum voor Canadese Diensten (Service Canada Access Centre / Centre d'accès Service Canada)
- Bezoek www.canada.gc.ca
- Bel 1 800 O-Canada (1 800 622-6232)
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Job Opportunity	Event	Job Opportunities
<p>If you are a compass, we have seventy young people seeking direction. Immanuel CRC of Brampton, Ont. is seeking a</p> <p>YOUTH DIRECTOR</p> <p>dedicated to maintaining and enhancing the existing programs of this well-established youth group. Church and area profiles available upon request. Please send resumes to Immanuelouthdirector@hotmail.com or mail to:</p> <p>Immanuel CRC, 63 Church St. E., Brampton, ON L6V 1G1 Att. Youth Director Calling Committee.</p> <p>Classis Chatham Youth Ministry Committee has an opening for a half-time (20 hours/week)</p> <p>CLASSICAL YOUTH COORDINATOR</p> <p>to promote and advocate an effective Youth Ministry for and within our Classis. Please forward resumes to, or for a complete job description contact, Ron Hosmar, Chair of the Classis Chatham Classical Youth Ministry Team.</p> <p>Ron Hosmar, 1281 Exmouth St. Sarnia, Ontario, N7S 1W9 519-337-6485 Office 519-337-3008 Fax (email)ronscryc@ebtech.net</p>	<p>40th Anniversary of Athens Christian School</p> <p>Athens Christian School is celebrating its 40th anniversary on Saturday, February 17, 2001.</p> <p>Please send pictures from graduations, school trips, or any info that may be of interest. There will be a "Pot Blessings" dinner for family, members, and alumni at Centre 76 Memorial Arena, Henry St, Athens, social hour starting at 6 p.m. and dinner at 7 p.m. Must RSVP by February 8.</p> <p>We're planning to have an Alumni/Society Choir. Anyone interested in joining this choir contact Gail Stopfel at the school 613-924-9500.</p> <p>For more info please contact the school: e-mail address, acsmail@recorder.ca or Debbie Verburg at 613-924-9770 or roosburg@recorder.ca Becky Smid at 613-924-2644, smiddyb@hotmail.com</p>	<p>The Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools invites applications for the position of:</p> <p>Director of Development:</p> <p>This senior position is responsible for designing and implementing fundraising programs to sustain the development of Christian curriculum in Canada.</p> <p>Additional responsibilities include promotion advocacy and communications as well as curriculum design.</p> <p>The successful candidate will have vision for Christian education, a broad range of education experience in Alliance schools and a working knowledge of finances and fundraising.</p> <p>Inquiries and/or Resumé should be sent to:</p> <p>Dr. Adrian Guldemon, Executive Director Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools 617 Garner Rd. E., Ancaster ON L9G 3K9 Fax: 905-648-2110 or email: adriang@oacs.org</p>



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Port Alberni - CJAV ... 7:00 pm 1240	Owen Sound - CFOS ... 7:00 am 560
Prince George - CIRX ... 7:00 am 94.3	Pembroke - CHVR ... 10:00 am 96.7
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Smithers - CFBV ... 9:15 am 1230	Stratford - CJCS ... 8:30 am 1240
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Brooks - CIBQ ... 8:00 am 1340	Saint John - CHSJ ... 9:00 am 94.1
Ft. McMurray - CJOK ... 8:30 am 1230	PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
High River - CHRB ... 6:30 pm 1140	Charlottetown - CFCY ... 7:00 am 630
Edmonton - CJCA ... 8:00 pm 930	NOVA SCOTIA
Westlock - CFOK ... 7:30 am 1370	Bridgewater - CKBW ... 7:30 am 1000
SASKATCHEWAN	Digby - CKDY ... 6:00 am 1420
Estevan - CJSL ... 8:00 am 1280	Halifax - CFDR ... 8:30 am 780
Weyburn - CFSL ... 8:00 am 1190	Liverpool - CKBW ... 7:30 am 94.5
MANITOBA	Kentville - CKEN ... 8:30 am 1490
Altona - CFAM ... 9:30 am 950	Middleton - CKAD ... 8:30 am 1350
Steinbach - CHSM ... 8:00 am 1250	New Glasgow - CKEC ... 7:30 am 1320
Winnipeg - CKJS ... 9:15 am 810	Shelburne - CKBW ... 7:30 am 93.1
ONTARIO	Sydney - CJCB ... 7:00 am 1270
Atikokan - CHAK ... 9:30 am 1240	Weymouth - CKDY ... 8:30 am 103.1
Chatham - CFCO ... 6:30 am 630	Kid's Corner-Radio
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Guelph - CJOY ... 8:30 am 1460	Nordeg, AB - CHBW ... 8:30 am-Sunday 93.9fm
Hamilton - CHAM ... 7:30 am 820	Rocky Mtn. House, AB - CHBW ... 8:30 am-Sunday 94.5fm
Kapuskasing - CKAP ... 7:00 am 580	Prince Rupert, BC - CIAJ ... 10 am-Saturday 100.7fm
	Niagara Falls, ON - CJRN ... 7:30am-Sunday 710am



Home Missions Regional Co-Director Christian Reformed Church in North America

The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) is seeking applicants for the position of

HOME MISSIONS REGIONAL CO-DIRECTOR

for central and Eastern Canada. Responsibilities include new church development leadership in the region, campus ministry support, and collaboration of ministry with Home Missions Regional Co-Director for established church development. In addition, this position may entail representation on various ministry teams for Home Missions at the CRC offices in Canada and U.S. The regional co-director will have an appropriate educational and professional background, experience in church-related ministries, and management experience in Christian not-for-profit organizations and organizational leadership skills are preferred qualifications. Membership in the Christian Reformed Church is required.

To confidentially apply for this position or receive a position description, please submit by **February 15, 2001** a copy of your resume and a letter stating your interest to:

Director of Personal
3475 Mainway, PO Box 5070 STN LCD 1
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8 Canada
Telephone: 616-224-5881 / Fax: 616-224-5896
Email: colemann@crcna.org

Teachers

REXDALE, ONT.:
Timothy Christian School in Rexdale, Ontario (a suburb of Toronto), is looking for a **Grade 7 teacher** to fill a Parental Leave from mid-March to the end of May, 2001. Computer skills would be an asset. For more information, please contact the principal:

Trudy Jager
28 Elmhurst Dr., Rexdale ON
M9W 2J5
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Fax: 905-775-2395 E-mail: dntvdkool@altavista.com

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Community Christian Reformed Church of Kitchener, Ontario, seeks a full-time administrative assistant to aid with our ministry activities. The position includes reception services, clerical support for pastors and committees, coordination of church resources and other administrative tasks. Proficiency in Word, Excel and PowerPoint would be an asset. Applicants must have a strong relationship with the Lord. For inquiries, please contact Clarence Damsma at 519-743-0964;

E-mail:

c.jdamsma@sympatico.ca
Please direct applications by

February 1 to:

Community Christian Reformed Church
1275 Bleams Road
Kitchener, ON, N2G 3W5

Attn: Search Committee

Fax: 519-743-4434

Phone: 519-743-9482

E-mail: office@ccrc.on.ca

Website: www.ccrc.on.ca

Calendar of Events

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is \$7.50 per line, or \$1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion.

- Jan. 21 Dutch Service, Ancaster CRC, 70 Garner Rd. E. (Hwy 53), Ancaster, Ont. 3 p.m., Rev. Kranenburg preaching.
- Jan. 26 and 27 Pre-marriage seminar – at First Christian Reformed Church, Guelph. For information or to register, call 519-822-7720
- Feb. 10 Mountain Area Christian Singles Dramatization & Social, Burlington, Ont. Info.: Sandra 905-388-7387
- Feb. 17 40th Anniversary Athens Christian School, Athens, Ont. Info.: 613-924-9500, see ad in this issue.
- March 4 Dutch Service, Ancaster CRC, 70 Garner Rd. E. (Hwy 53), Ancaster, Ont. 3 p.m., Rev. De Bolster preaching.
- Mar. 23-25 East CRC of Strathroy, Ont. 50th Anniversary Celebration weekend. Dinner Fri. evening; Sat. Open House and Evening Program; Sun. special worship services. Call Rie VanSteege for dinner reservations or more info 519-245-6785 or e-mail: secretary@eastcrc.org.



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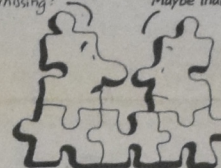
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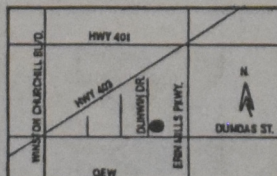
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News

Evangelical Christians in Bolivia caught in local coca war



CHIP AND ROSA MARIA PETERSON

The Valles, fertile farmland in south-central Bolivia.

David Miller

COCHABAMBA, Bolivia (Compass) — The violent October protests that rocked Bolivia, causing 12 deaths, scores of injuries and millions of dollars in damages, embodied one more local clash in the international drug war. The conflict has pitted the government, which is implementing a plan to eradicate the coca plant, the raw material from which cocaine is produced, against peasant farmers from the tropical Chapare region, where 90 per cent of the country's illicit coca crop is grown.

Tragically, the controversy has enveloped hundreds of evangelical believers. During the protest, Christians manned road blocks and clashed with army units, apparently in support of the "right" to grow coca. In many cases, however, the Christians joined the pro-coca movement against their will. In fact, evidence suggests that a basic human right — freedom of

conscience — has become a casualty of this local drug war.

The plight of the Yura tribe, who have lived in Chapare for generations, shows how this happens. First introduced to the gospel in the 1950s by missionaries of the New Tribes Mission, the Yuras today have nine local churches and a bilingual (Yura-Spanish) Christian school. A few Yuras grow coca, but the majority of the tribe — and nearly all the believing Christians — avoid the leaf in favor of bananas and rice.

Evil uses of coca

Saturnino Temo, 42, pastor of the National Evangelical Church in Puerto Cochabamba, explained, "As we look at it, the plant itself is not evil. However, the ways mankind has discovered to misuse it are evil. It is not something that benefits humanity, so for me it is not right (to grow coca). As a son of God, I'm here to bring people

the message of life, not death."

Despite Pastor Temo's views, several men in his church lent support to the pro-coca cause. They had no choice. In early October, the Chimore Homesteaders Federation, a local farm union that organized highway blockades to protest coca eradication, sent the Yura an ultimatum: join our blockades, or we will cut the road from Puerto Cochabamba to Sinahota. The 10 kilometre stretch is the only route between the Yura and the markets where they sell their banana and rice crops. Destruction of the vital link would create hardship for the tribe.

"Some of the brothers decided they had to comply," Temo said. "They went and joined the blockades for two or three days so that the protestors would not destroy the bridge on our road, as they were threatening to do."

Farm unions also levied fines on members in order to coerce them to join the barricades. As violence at the road blocks escalated, many Christians found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Such was the case of an elder from the Church of God in Nuevo Tacopaya. The local farm union ordered him to a barricade at Cruce Castillo. When an army unit came to clear the road, shooting erupted and the man received a bullet in the shoulder as he fled the scene.

Violence that claimed the life of another Chapare farmer in June graphically demonstrates the dilemma Bolivian Christians face in the coca war. Originally from the highland village of Pocona, the

man moved to the Chapare region five years ago and began to grow coca. According to family members, he eventually felt God wanted him to destroy his coca plants, which he did.

His neighbors, however, did not believe his change of heart was due to religious conviction and accused the man of spying for the drug police. On June 18, unknown assailants attacked and killed him with machetes.

Working to ease tensions

Evangelical leaders are working to ease tensions brought on by the coca controversy. The task requires discretion as well as conviction, especially when dealing with indigenous farm unions.

Peacemaking efforts are desperately needed at the moment. Although protests have temporarily been called off and road blocks dismantled, tensions in the country remain high. Farm union organizers, who are known to receive funding from Libya, Colombia drug cartels and other foreign sources, have vowed to fight on until the government abolishes the coca eradication program.

Bolivian authorities, on the other hand, remain committed to "zero coca" production in the Chapare region. During the last week in October, President Hugo Banzer Suarez deployed an elite, anti-terrorist army unit in the Chapare region to enforce eradication. Unless the standoff is resolved, this particular skirmish in the international drug war may well claim more victims among Christian believers.

News Digest

Monk rock rules

TRIKORFO, Greece (AP) — After soaring up the pop charts last summer, a group of Greek Orthodox monks is working on a music video for an upcoming single about the dangers of technology without restrictions. The video features a gold-garbed man who represents an evil computer user, armed with personal data. The bearded monks belt out the lyrics to *Tsipaki*, or *Little Computer Chip*: "I'm a chip, so small, that will lead you to slavery."

Last year, a CD from the monks went platinum in Greece, selling more than 52,000 copies. It was distributed without a bar code, which some Orthodox believers consider a sign of technology's encroachment. The group's new disc, *SOS*, is scheduled for release early this year. The monks' songs offer traditional Christian themes as well as views on the dangers of globalization and rampant technology — all with a modern beat.

Tiger on the lam

FRANKFURT, Germany — An escaped tiger stopped rush-hour traffic on Germany's busiest motorway for more than two hours before he was recaptured, Dec. 28. Sahib, a young male weighing 150 kg, ran away from a circus and was spotted by motorists on the shoulder of the A66 at Wiesbaden.

"We had no option but to close the motorway," local police told Reuters. The tiger caused a 20-km traffic jam, as he defied attempts by police, circus managers and others to catch him in the dark. It took six shots from an anesthetic dart gun before Sahib was pacified. Taken back to the circus, he was too drowsy to perform that night.

Cod can't swim

BRUSSELS — The British government has disclosed the real reason behind the disappearance of cod from the North Sea: they just don't swim very well.

"Cod are not very good swimmers, so they are easily overtaken by trawlers and nets," the government disclosed in a memo given to journalists during recent late-night European Union negotiations on cutting catch quotas, reports Reuters.

And how do the British authorities know this? "Government fish scientists at Lowestoft kept a cod named Doris for 18 years," said the memo. "She died last month."

Britain's Preacher of the Year award goes to woman

LONDON, Eng. (Religion Today) — Britain's "Preacher of the Year" is a Salvation Army officer who works with prisoners and refugees. Col. Margaret Hay won the award given annually by the *London Times*, beating out 500 competitors from several faiths and Christian bodies, the *Christian Science Monitor* reported. She is the first woman to win the award.

"It just goes to show that God does use the foolish and weak to do His work," Hay told the *Monitor*. Passion, study, and restraint while speaking are essential to a good sermon, she said. "If a preacher is too free off the lip, too glib, or too long, it won't work." Keeping the proper perspective also is essential, she said. "The aim is

transformation — and it is God doing it, not the preacher."

Hay ministers to inmates at Rochester Prison, near London, with her husband, Laurence, who is also a colonel in the Salvation Army. She also counsels asylum seekers at a detainee centre near Kent. She often finds despair among the prisoners and refugees but her message to them is that "the light of God shines on all people, even in the depths of their distress," she told the *Monitor*. Her prizewinning sermon drawn from the book of Isaiah focused on the same message. She said she will use the prize money, approximately \$1,500, to help asylum seekers with their daily needs.

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